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ABSTRACT

This study investigated gender differences associated with experiential learning. The data come from two studies of general management level men and women. The first, conducted between 1981 and 1984, involved 189 men and 2 women, and utilized interviews and questionnaires. In 1984-85, a second study interviewed 76 women. In each study, managers were asked to report key events that influenced them as managers. Even though these men and women were at similar organizational levels when interviewed, the differences in the learning they most frequently reported suggests the women were focused on discovering who they were as individuals in these organizations, on finding their niche, and on integrating self with environment. The men appeared to be focused on the mastery of more specific business skills. These differences may be due to women having less organizational experience and not having as clear an idea about the criteria for a good manager. The impact of these factors may be enhanced by the isolation women feel, especially at higher levels of management. Factors such as organizational experience, newcomer or minority status, the need to define sex-role appropriate behavior, isolation, and discrimination create a working environment more complex in its challenges for women. A comparative analysis of the key developmental events emerging from this study is included. (LLL)

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Gender Differences in the Development of Managers: How Women Managers Learn From Experience

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Introduction

It is now almost two decades since women first entered the ranks of management in significant numbers, and most companies have succeeded in creating large pools of high-potential women. They are much less successful, however, in promoting women to top-level positions, and have trouble retaining those who do make it. While a small percentage of women seem to thrive, many come away frustrated by their own attempts to succeed (Tashjian, 1988).

Why are companies finding it so difficult to include women in executive ranks? Three explanations are frequently offered. One explanation is that people find it difficult to overcome perceptions concerning the effect of gender on performance (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987; Powell, 1988). Because of sex role stereotypes, women have not always received the recognition and promotions they deserve.

Another explanation is that organizations in general tend to focus on talent identification rather than on learning and development (Hall, 1986). Although both men and women are hired because they possess required management abilities, a general tendency to neglect executive development may combine with gender stereotypes to create an environment in which women have less opportunity for development on the job.

A third explanation is that perhaps there are differences between men and women in how learning occurs or in what is learned from experience (Hoy, 1989)—so that women, when given the opportunity to develop, have done so in other than the expected ways. This study focuses on the latter two explanations—the opportunities for development and the learning outcomes.

Although a great deal of research energy has been devoted to understanding how and what people learn from experience (Kolb, 1974, 1983; Mumford, 1980; Cell, 1984; Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; Marsick, 1988; Snell, 1988; McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988), gender differences associated with experiential learning are still poorly understood. In order to investigate this question, we took two Center studies of executive development—one which deals almost exclusively with men, and one which looks only at women—and compared their findings. The following is a report of what we discovered.

We will first describe the sample of executives used in this comparison and the method used to analyze the data gathered from them. Then, we will present and discuss the primary developmental lessons that the two groups reported, as well as the key experiences or events that provided these lessons. We will close with a general discussion of the implications of what we have found. An Appendix contains tables that compare the men's and women's data on all thirty-three lesson and sixteen event categories.

Sample and Method

The data compared herein come from two studies of general-management-level men and women. The first, conducted between 1981 and 1984, involved 189 men and 2 women. These data, obtained partly through face-to-face interviews and partly by questionnaire, are the bases for both *Key Events in Executives' Lives* (Lindsey, Homes, & McCall, 1987) and *The Lessons of Experience* (McCall et al., 1988).

In 1984-85, a second study carried out face-to-face interviews of 76 women. Some of the data from this study appeared in *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Make it to the Top of America's Largest Corporations?* (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987).

For purposes of the present analysis, the data on the 2 women from the first were combined with those of the 76 from the second. Thus, we have a total of 78 women and 189 men for comparison.

The men came from six corporations (five of which were Fortune 50 firms and one of which was a major subsidiary of a large Canadian corporation). The women came from 25 corporations, all Fortune-l00-sized firms. The mean ages at the time of the interviews for the two groups were similar; the women averaged 41 years and the men 43. All of the managers were high-potential executives who were judged by top management as successful, and showed promise for future potential. The women were in positions ranging from one level below general management (for instance, director) to senior vice president. The men's titles ranged from high-level functional or general managers through chief executive.

It should be pointed out that the women in our sample represent the first nontraditional group with whom organizations have worked—those few, primarily white, women who had reached and maintained a top-level job in about two dozen major American corporations by 1985. As such, they provided, for most of these companies, the first experience with adjusting to and assimilating women managers at higher levels.

In each study, managers were asked to report key events:

> When you think about your career as a manager, certain events or episodes probably stand out in your mind—things

> that led to a lasting change in you as a manager. Please identify at least three key events in your career, things that made a difference in the way you manage now. What happened? What did you learn from it (for better or worse)?

We content-analyzed the women's events and lessons using the same framework developed for the men's data. We called an event a primary source of a lesson if it met either or both of two conditions: (1) the event was one of the three most frequently reported sources of the specified learning; (2) the event/lesson association occurred more than would be predicted by chance ($p < .05$).

For example, although managers may learn many different lessons from their first supervisory job, some lessons are reported more frequently than others. We thus call the event of first supervision a primary source of the three lessons most frequently reported in connection with it. If there were lessons which were not among the top three but whose relationship with the event was statistically significant (that is, it could not have occurred by chance), then we included those lessons also. We did not include any lesson for which the frequency was very small ($N < 2$ for women, $N < 4$ for men).

The Lessons of Experience

Both men and women reported a great variety and volume of lessons from their key events. The 189 men in our sample reported a total of 1,417 lessons from 607 reported events, for an average of 7.5 lessons per manager or 2.3 lessons per event. The 78 women in our sample reported a total of 677 lessons from 268 reported events, for an average of 8.7 lessons per manager or 2.5 lessons per event.

Description of Findings

The content-analysis of the men's and women's lessons resulted in thirty-three categories of learning. (See the complete list of learnings in the Appendix.) We focus in this section only on the twelve lesson categories most frequently reported by the two groups. These lessons represent the major learnings that the managers drew from the most important developmental opportunities they reported having in their careers thus far. By looking at the ways in which these major learnings converge and differ, we can begin to understand the texture of the learning environment for men and women in organizations. As we discuss key events in more detail later in this paper, we will refer to all thirty-three categories.

Seven lessons of the top twelve were reported by both men and women (see Table 1, page 6).

*Self-confidence** was a major learning for all managers. Sometimes men and women talked in general ways about enhanced self-esteem.

> I am suited for certain things; can do those better. I wouldn't trade what I have got.

> It instilled confidence in me, being able to run a project this large and get results.

Often, self-confidence was enhanced in relation to a specific skill or characteristic.

---

* Throughout the text, lessons will be expressed in italics to easily distinguish them from events.

Table 1

Twelve Most Frequent Lessons for Men and Women

Directing and Motivating Employees
Self-confidence
Basic Management Values
How to Work With Executives
Understanding Other People's Perspective
Dealing With People Over Whom You Have No Authority
Handling Political Situations

For Men Only	**For Women Only**
Technical/Professional Skills	*Personal Limits And Blind Spots*
All About the Business	*Taking Charge of Career*
Coping With Ambiguous Situations	*Recognizing and Seizing Opportunities*
Shouldering Full Responsibility	*Coping With Situations Beyond Your Control*
Persevering Through Adversity	*Knowing What Excites You*

> I realized I was probably the most innovative of the bunch—several things I led my team into doing were far better than anyone else's solutions.

> Learned that I can lead people, can influence people.

The majority of the other shared learnings have to do with understanding and dealing effectively with other people (*Directing and Motivating Employees, Understanding Other People's Perspectives, Dealing With People Over Whom You Have No Authority, How to Work With Executives*). One manager reported learning how to motivate.

> I saw different levels of motivation and ways my staff worked. It's important to understand each one.

In another learning experience, a manager who tried to get cooperation with task force members in lateral relationships with her recounted discovering that:

> You have to sell the plan, and you need time to communicate the plan.

In a similar situation, another manager reported that his assignment taught him how to manage people outside his own group. In addition, many of the men and women reported learning how to present to, meet the needs of, and interact with higher level executives. Common lessons were:

> I learned the efficiency of being direct.

> Say what you mean—make a decision and say it, because the longer you take to say something, the less impression you'll make.

Another common cluster of learnings shared by men and women concerns coming to terms with organizational dynamics (*Basic Management Values* and *Handling Political Situations*). One career assignment helped a manager realize that she had made:

> . . . a semiconscious decision that I had to be more of a politician, a team player, to get support from other people.

Managers also talked about the need to set their own standards:

> Determine your limits.

> Don't go along with behaviors or actions that go against your values.

> Don't get in a position where your integrity is at risk.

In addition to these seven learnings that men and women both report most frequently, there are five lessons which appear in the top twelve for men but not for women, and five which appear in the top twelve for women but not for men. The lessons which appear in the top group for men focus on mastering new skills that relate directly to job performance. For example, *Learning Technical/Professional Skills* and *All About the Business* (growing in one's understanding of the business as a whole) are among the top third of all lessons reported by men, but don't appear among the top third of all lessons reported by women. The importance of technical and professional competencies and business knowledge are obvious in this male executive's learning.

> The assignment gave me an exposure to the production firing line and allowed me to practice and put in place management techniques and talents that had been fine-tuned through the years. It allowed me to spread my wings and grow with full responsibility for my actions which resulted in a future promotion.

Shouldering Full Responsibility, *Coping with Ambiguous Situations*, and *Persevering Through Adversity* are also among the top third of lessons reported by men but not women. In talking about these learnings, men describe facing the risks involved in situations where the manager is fully accountable and must learn to make quick decisions based on insufficient data. One manager said:

> I learned to make decisions fast. I also learned to innovate and change systems and processes as the rapid growth happened.

Another man learned how to define priorities and devise methods for managing crises.

For women, the lessons distinctive to their top twelve include several having to do with learning about themselves and how to best fit into the organizational environment. *Know What Excites You* (identifying content areas, jobs, or tasks that are exciting or valuable) was one such lesson category. One woman reported:

> I learned that the position level wasn't important to me. I wouldn't stay in any position just because it was higher. I wanted more challenge, didn't like boring jobs.

Women also reported more frequently the lessons of *Taking Charge of Career* and *Recognizing and Seizing Opportunities*. One woman learned:

> If you want to move around in a company and have new responsibilities, you need to get "P&L" responsibility.

Another reported:

> Keep your eyes open; learn why a position is important to you.

Finally, women also reported more frequently the lessons of *Recognizing Personal Limits and Blind Spots* and *Coping With Situations Beyond Your Control.*

> There are limits. Know your own and know what you can and want to do.

One woman said her strategy was to be adaptable.

> You can't change a culture, you have to learn to live within it as best you can.

Another learned how to:

> Accept defeat and walk away; get on with a new opportunity, or deal with it so you can go on.

Discussion

Even though these men and women were at similar organizational levels when they were interviewed, the differences in the learning they most frequently reported suggest the women were focused on discovering who they were as individuals in these organizations, on finding their niche, and on integrating self with environment. The men appear focused on the mastery of more specific business skills.

There are several possible explanations for these differences. In spite of the age and level similarity between the men and the women we interviewed, the women may have had somewhat less organizational experience. Many of these women may have been promoted rapidly to meet affirmative action guidelines, whereas many of the men may have had a head start on their management careers through service in the military, which would give them the edge both in early supervisory experience and familiarity with organizational dynamics.

Morrison and Hock's (1986) work suggests that women may be more engaged in personal development because they have less overall organizational experience. These authors outline an experienced-based career-development model which describes two types of learning: role development and personal development. Role development, involving the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary to perform one's current job, appears to be very similar to many of the major lessons reported by the men in our study. Personal development, on the other hand, involves learning attitudes and values and adjusting one's own personality and cognitive characteristics to the job or environment. Morrison and Hock argue that personal development is very strong during the initial socialization stage and very weak as the individual reaches his or her "target" position. This second type of development appears to coincide with many of the learnings most frequently reported by the women in our study.

In addition, women may perceive more of a need for this type of personal development than do men because the criteria for a good manager may not be as clear to them. Several studies have shown that both men and women are likely to describe effective men in ways similar to how they describe effective managers (Schein, 1973, 1975; Massengill & DiMarco, 1979; Powell & Butterfield, 1979; Powell, 1988). Both sexes are less likely to describe effective women in the same way they describe effective managers. So female managers probably spend more time engaged in a process of self-analysis; learning what a female manager is by identifying the traits of a male manager that she does not possess.

In fact, the process of personal cognitive adjustment may never end for women. Because women often operate within a narrow band of acceptable behavior, they must constantly evaluate the sex-role appropriateness of the behaviors they see demonstrated by their male peers. Success may depend on their toning down certain desired characteristics of masculine behavior with more traditionally feminine behaviors, or on combining seemingly contradictory behaviors, such as being tough but not macho or being ambitious but not expecting equal treatment (Morrison et al., 1987).

The impact of these factors may be enhanced by the isolation women feel, especially at higher levels of management. Many of the women in our sample described at least one experience of feeling unwelcomed by their male peers, a superior, or subordinates. Morrison et al. (1987) report that all of the executive women "had been in situations where they felt people were uncomfortable with them because they are women" (p. 86). A number of these pioneers —about one-third—faced and fought acts of discrimination.

Although women may be more critically reflective by nature or by virtue of the stress of their environment, it may also be that some of the learning differences we see between men and women may reflect age differences in these data. If women get specific assignments at later ages than men, as if their experience base covers a more limited and more recent span of time, then women's lessons may more often represent learning that occurs at mid-life, or may indicate that more of the women are at developmental transition points. This may account, in part, for the high degree of self-assessment present in the women's learnings, since assessment is a natural and critical part of the mid-life stage of adult development (Kegan, 1982; Hall, 1986).

Factors such as organizational experience, newcomer or minority status, the need to define sex-role-appropriate behavior, isolation, and discrimination create a working environment more complex in its challenges for women. Because of this, women are more likely to be struggling with issues concerning how and where they fit into the organization and how they can succeed in challenging situations. In our study, women were confronting questions such as, "Am I really cut out for this? Is this me? Is it worth it? Could I be more successful somewhere else?"

Regardless of the causes, the differences in reported lessons indicate that the environment for learning may differ significantly for women and men in organizations. The most concrete indications we have of learning environments are the key developmental opportunities described by our samples of male and female general managers. The next section of this paper focuses on a comparison of these key developmental events.

Key Events: The Learning Environments

In their analysis, McCall et al., (1988) found that most of the developmental experiences reported by men can be grouped into three large arenas—Assignments, Hardships, and Other People (see Figure 1).

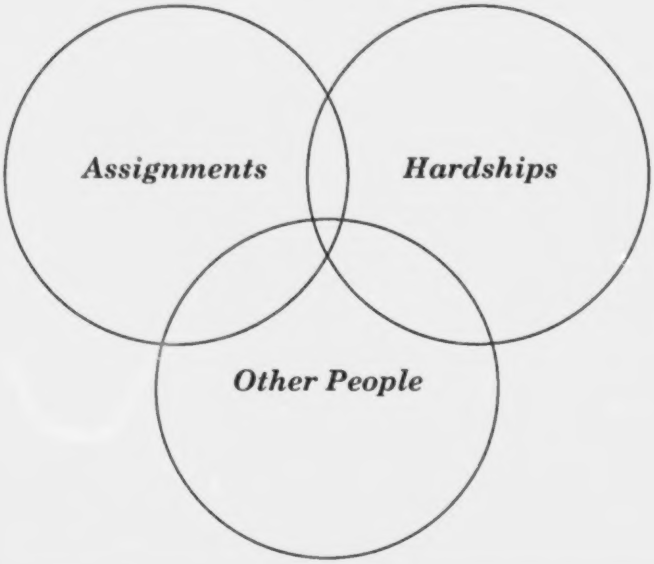
Assignments represent those experiences deliberately given to people on the job. They include assignments to a critical project or task force, significant increases in job scope, first supervisory job, moving from the line to a staff role, being responsible for turning around an ailing part of the business, and starting up a new part of the business.

Hardships encompass the difficult, even traumatic experiences that are cast upon us unintentionally, either on or off the job. These include personal traumas involving self or family, career changes, employee performance problems, business failures or mistakes, and lousy jobs.

Other People experiences focus on observing the consequences of the actions of others, usually on the job, often bosses.

Figure 1

Arenas for Development



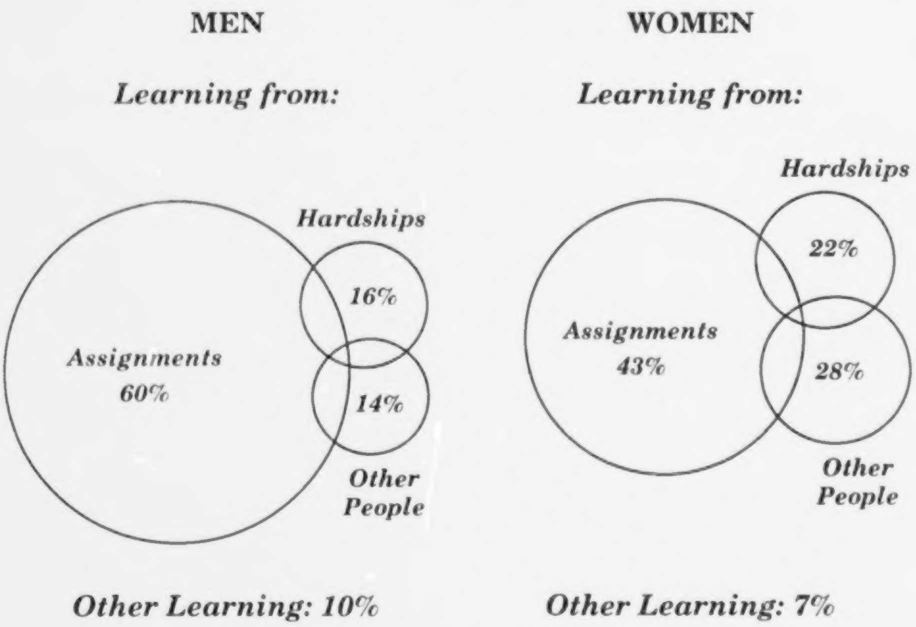
These include experiences with good, helpful bosses; with difficult or incompetent bosses; and with decent bosses who are seen as flawed in some way.

As we look at the percent of all learning reported from each of the three general arenas for development, we begin to see some differences between men's and women's experience bases (see Figure 2).

Clearly, assignments are the most powerful way to learn, regardless of whether the manager is a man or a woman. Yet men's assignments appear to be an even richer learning experience than women's. The percentage of all learning men derive from assignments (60%) is four times the percent of all learning they derive from other people (14%), whereas for women, assignments provide less than twice the percent of all learning they derive from other people (43% versus 28%).

Figure 2

Percent of All Learning From Arenas for Development



Do women focus on learning from other people while men focus on learning from specific tasks, or do the learning frequencies reflect an underlying difference in experience for these two groups? Although the data we have collected in these studies cannot answer the first question, they do address the second. It is to these data that we now turn.

Assignments

Assignments are the specific, nuts-and-bolts jobs and tasks that managers tackle every day. There were six main types of assignments that the managers described: First Supervisory Job, Managing a Larger Scope, Line-to-Staff Switches, Project/Task Force Assignments, Turning a Business Around, and Starting From Scratch. (See the Appendix for full definitions of each of these.)

When we compared the percentage of men and women reporting different assignments, we found that four out of the six types are quite familiar to both men and women (see Table 2, page 16). Men and women were just as likely to report as developmental their first supervisory jobs, leaps in scope, line-to-staff switches, and project/task force assignments.

Turning A Business Around and Starting From Scratch. The two assignments that are strikingly different for men and women are Turning a Business Around and Starting From Scratch. These women reported significantly fewer turnaround assignments than the men and virtually no start-from-scratch assignments. Both assignments are extremely challenging—possibly the two toughest a manager can face. To be successful, a manager who is tackling a fix-it or a turnaround must have a broad range of skills, and the more potent assignments are usually higher in risk.

McCall et al. (1988) begins with a description of one manager's experience in a start-from-scratch assignment.

> He watched from the helicopter door as laborers clutching chain saws were lowered into the jungle below. For several days the snarl of the saws rose up from the canopy, until at last a landing area large enough to accommodate a helicopter had been cleared. This task constituted the ground breaking

Table 2

Percent of Managers Reporting Assignments as Key Development Events

Quite Similar . . .	**Men (N=189)**		**Women (N=78)**
• First supervisory job	15.9		21.8
• Managing larger scope	40.7		42.3
• Project/task force	28.6		20.5
• Line to staff switches	6.9		2.6
But Some Striking Differences . . .			
• Turning business around	29.6	**	6.4
• Starting from scratch	16.9	**	0.0

** $p < .05$

> for the new plant on the Amazon. It was indicative of difficulties to come.
>
> He was responsible for everything—two thousand laborers, costs, results. He had to deal with a hostile left-wing government in a language he had learned only after arriving there. He had to fight disease, contend with political riots, and stand by as his meticulous plans were dashed by capricious officials. Yet, despite these adverse circumstances, the plant got built and is in operation today. (p. 15)

This manager talked about his learning in the following way:

> Part of it was that you really find out if you can manage when you lock up with a foreign government, because they can tell you to go to hell in a second. Other things? I don't know, so many I can't describe them, but overwhelmingly a sense that if I could survive this, nothing would ever hurt that way again.

For men, this powerful experience is a primary source of five of their most frequently reported lessons, including two that only men reported in the top twelve lessons (*Shouldering Full Responsibility* and *All About the Business*).

Although women reported learning some of these lessons from other types of events (for instance, First Supervisory Job, Project/Task Force Assignments, or Turning a Business Around), none of the women we interviewed reported having a start-from-scratch assignment. The potency of a start-from-scratch assignment may mean these lessons learned elsewhere by the women are of a different quality.

Like a start-from-scratch assignment, Turning a Business Around is another powerful, important experience. Lindsey et al. (1987) describe potent fix-its as "in fact real messes. The manager is sent in to resurrect an operation besieged with problems internally and externally, with no obvious single cure, and is under considerable pressure to work a miracle fast" (p. 38).

The majority of the women's fix-its, or turnarounds, did not have this potency. They did not involve a great deal of risk and were not highly visible assignments. Except for a few cases, they could not be described as a real mess that the manager was sent in to fix. Sometimes, implementing a new program or system would cure the ailment. For instance, one woman described her entrance into a new position:

> Bills hadn't gone out for three months. The entire place was so bad, and I didn't know the systems. I sent out a memo in an attempt to set deadlines for things. I got lots of help from my peers and boss. We put out a new memo of system plans for a two-year period. We never missed a date.

This assignment did present a challenge to the manager, but not as much as there might have been in a very potent turnaround situation. Although these smaller scale assignments can be very valuable (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989), the potential for learning is probably not as great as it would be from a larger scale assignment of this type.

There are other quality differences in men's and women's assignments, as well. For example, frequently the business turnaround (as well as the start-up) assignments that men reported took place as part of an expatriate assignment. It was more common to hear men report turning around or starting a business from scratch outside of the United States:

> I was sent to Morocco by headquarters as one of two international employees. My brief was to set up a locally staffed marketing group.
>
> I was assigned to an overseas location where we had major profit problems. We and our customers were losing money, and there were major labor problems.

Nancy Adler's research (1987) has indicated that women managers have great difficulty obtaining assignments overseas. Our results are similar to Adler's. Of the few turnarounds reported by women, none took place in foreign territory. Women's turnaround assignments were within the organization and tended to be at the group or department level where they were charged with setting up new systems, restructuring, and cleaning up messes within their appointed functions.

Although the expatriate element was often missing, the task complexity of women's turnaround experiences often was enhanced by a factor virtually unseen among the men. Half of the women who reported a turnaround experience as a key event also reported that it was, at the same time, their first management job. It may have been that women with no prior supervisory experience were sometimes given the challenging opportunity to manage a turnaround situation by companies hard-pressed to move women ahead. Although these organizations can be commended for their willingness to select women for nontraditional assignments, the stress placed on this handful of women was often excessive. One woman who described such an experience said:

> We were under competitive attack. We'd been sleepy. We could catch up or lose out within 1-2 seasons. I was given the business to run. I got agreement on a broad strategy, then went ahead. This was the first time I had subordinates and I was given the worst in the company. I thought I could make up for them. I worked so hard to get the job done, developing people. . . . I tried everything! I learned the business.

There are four lesson categories that men and women reported primarily in connection with the Turning a Business Around Assignments: *Directing and Motivating Employees*, *Dealing With People Over Whom You Have No Authority*, *Shouldering Full Responsibility*, and *Persevering Through Adversity*. Many of the additional lessons men derive from their turnaround experiences are the more complex lessons, critical to success at higher levels in the organization (for instance, *All About the Business*, *Managing Former Bosses and Peers*, *Use [and Abuse] of Power*, *Building and Using Structure and Control Systems*, *Confronting Employee Performance Problems*, *Being Tough When Necessary*, *Innovative Problem-solving Methods*, and *Strategies of Negotiation*). In contrast, women reported two lessons which are more internally focused: *Knowing What Excites You* and *Personal Limits and Blind Spots*. The learning these women derived from their turnaround experiences may reflect the relative intensity of those experiences compared to men.

Line-to-Staff Switches and First Supervisory Job. What women report learning from their experiences can also reflect the timing of those experiences or the manager's background prior to the experience. Learning from one's line-to-staff moves and from first supervisory experiences are good examples. Although there are a few women who report Line-to-Staff Switches as key events, this experience is not a primary source of any category of learning for women.

In contrast to the men who report this event as developmental, women are not typically strangers to staff roles when they move from line to staff. The few women who do report this event as significant tend to have spent time in staff roles prior to this switch, moving into the line and then back into staff. Although they do report learning as a result of this move back into the staff side of the business, they did not report it as a primary source of any type of lesson. It was not a stretch assignment for these women.

Men, on the other hand, do experience significant growth from this event. Line-to-Staff Switches are a primary source of six different lessons for men, including three that are in their top twelve: *Technical/Professional Skills*, *All About the Business* (a broader knowledge of the business), and *Coping With Ambiguous Situations*. One can see the potential for growth and learning in this male executive's switch from a line-to-staff position:

> This is a totally different environment. I've never before been in a position with no bottom line. It is intellectually demanding, but I had trouble accepting the sterility of the analyses. That was dehumanizing. I did not enjoy the job, although I had a good boss and an exciting chance to work with the top brass.

For both men and women, the First Supervisory Job is a critical turning point in management development. One male manager reported:

> At age 24, I was promoted to my first managerial position as office services manager, with no advance notice—not even a hint it was to happen. I replaced an individual who had had a heart attack, and who had held the position for 15 years. I had absolutely no experience in managing anything at that time, and I was suddenly responsible for supplying a 600-person operation. (McCall et al., 1988, p. 26)

The First Supervisory Jobs reported by these men and women were somewhat similar in nature, although there were some important differences. Almost 40 percent of the first management jobs reported by women were within staff functions. The following event reported by a woman exemplifies this type of experience:

> At age 33 I took over as V.P. of [staff function], 1-2 years shy of being ready. My boss got a sudden promotion and wanted me to have it. He was not expecting to be promoted so soon and so hadn't yet groomed me to take his job. I had never managed before and the position was very visible and very sensitive. The first year was a continual battle to get a grip on the job. I never worked so hard in my life.

And for 17 percent of the women reporting this event, the initial supervisory position was also their first experience on the line side of the business, having been in a series of staff jobs since the beginning of their careers.

> At age 33, the first time I had the opportunity to manage people. All my experience had been staff. When my promo-

> tion was announced, I met with the new boss. He said he didn't want me; I was being forced on him; he would try to make it work. We had a good discussion; he felt uncomfortable.

An additional difference between men's and women's first supervision events is illustrated in the two preceding examples. The women in this sample tended to be significantly older than the men when they got their first supervisory job. Eighty percent of the men's first supervision events occurred before the age of 30, compared to only about 18 percent of the first supervision events reported by the women (see Table 3). About 82 percent of the women had their first supervisory job later than age 30, and about 30 percent waited until at least 35 for this opportunity.

In terms of learning, First Supervisory Job is an important event for all managers. This assignment is one of the top three sources, for both men and women, of these lessons: *Managing Former Bosses and Peers*, *Strategic Thinking*, and *Getting People to Implement Solutions*. Additionally for men, first supervision is a critical source of two other lessons: *Sensitivity to the Human Side of Management* and *Shouldering Full Responsibility*. Although individual women may have reported learning some of these lessons, first supervision does not appear to be a major source of these learnings for women. Yet the First Supervisory Job was a major

Table 3

First Supervisory Job:
Cumulative Percent By Age At Event

Age	Men	Women
20 – 24	55.0%	0%
25 – 29	80.0%	17.7%
30 – 34	95.0%	70.6%
35 – 39	100.0%	94.1%
40 – 44		—
45+		100.0%

source of four other types of learnings among women: *Directing and Motivating Employees*, *Self-confidence*, *Dealing With People Over Whom You Have No Authority*, and *You Can't Manage Everything All Alone*.

So, although some of the assignments reported by women differ in quantity from those reported by men, other events differ in quality. One result of these differences may be that women see some of their other assignments as relatively richer experiences. This hypothesis is supported by the data which follow, indicating that two other assignments (Managing a Larger Scope and Project/Task Force Assignments) are primary sources of a wider range of lessons for women than they are for men; probably because men have more of an overall diversity of assignment experience on which to draw.

Managing a Larger Scope and Project/Task Force Assignments.

> I was promoted to group head for business support functions including finance, data processing, human resources, legal, office services, auditing, and liquidating discontinued businesses. I became exposed to managing other disciplines—forced to manage people out of my own areas of expertise, such as human resources—people of a different breed from me. I learned that the biggest step in people management is motivation. I realized the worth of team building, when before I had been more task-oriented.

An increase in responsibility that is both broader and different from that in their previous position is a powerful experience for any manager. Yet the women appear to have drawn a wider variety of lessons from their Managing a Larger Scope assignments than the men. In Managing a Larger Scope jobs, women reported learning some of the skill mastery lessons which appeared among the top twelve for men. These are *Technical / Professional Skills*, *All About the Business*, and *Coping With Ambiguous Situations*. This pattern repeats itself in the data on Project/Task Force Assignments.

Although both men and women reported Project/Task Force Assignments as primary sources of *Self-confidence* and *How to Work With Executives*, women reported Project/Task Force Assignments as a primary source of eleven other lessons. Several of these lessons are among the skill mastery lessons men report learning from other key events such as Starting From Scratch or Turning a Business Around.

In a recent article, Hall and Louis (1988) eloquently describe the developmental potential of project assignments for plateaued executives. The authors state that project work creates a sense of psychological success ("the intrinsic reward of a feeling of achievement and pride") because the person is assigned a whole task, the task has an activity life cycle, and the person is held accountable for end results. The life-cycle aspect of a project is of particular importance to development, because new problems tend to emerge as the project unfolds. The fact that project work finally comes to a close is helpful in that it provides the manager with an opportunity to reflect on the separate successes and failures inherent in the effort. The authors also point out that end result accountability provides the manager with a strong sense of ownership—a critical motivating force for any manager.

Although none of the executives in our sample were plateaued, the women did experience less intensity in the breadth and depth of their overall assignment experience. The degree to which women reported Project/Task Force Assignments as primary sources of important lessons is another testament to the developmental potential of project responsibility for anyone who is in the position of lacking other catalysts for growth.

Assignments as a Proving Ground. A common theme for women across all six assignments was establishing credibility. Because assignments encompass the heart of organizational life, managers gain credibility by accomplishing them well. Women may be in special need of the boost in credibility that assignments can provide, especially when they are the first to break the "glass ceiling" in their organizations.

Women who are in the position of being "the first woman to . . ." are often struggling to overcome negative perceptions—of self, bosses, peers, or subordinates. The women reported numerous stories about getting one's foot in the door, of having to demonstrate competence—often over and over—and proving to other people (or one's self) that they were the right person for the job. For instance, one of the women who told us about her first line management job said:

> There were serious doubts whether a woman could handle this job. The department secretaries met with my boss one day and questioned his decision to put me in this job. The older subordinates who worked for me felt they should have gotten the job.

Another woman described her struggle for credibility in her leap-in-scope assignment:

> I was the first female executive, quite visible. No one missed whatever I did. I felt I had to be successful if there were to be other women in the future. Being the only woman everything was an ongoing challenge.

Credibility-building experiences such as these serve as sources of learning for female managers. Besides *Self-confidence*, women tended to report lessons about *Personal Limits and Blind Spots*, *Coping With Situations Beyond Your Control*, and *Taking Charge of Career* from assignments in which they struggled for credibility. In describing their development, the women noted the importance of being patient and persistent and keeping realistic expectations. In addition, they talked about learning to take responsibility for the direction of their own careers, and learning not to wait for the organization to make (or fail to make) career decisions for them.

Other People

Learning from other people is the second arena of developmental experiences for these executives. Two types of events comprise this arena.

Bosses. The first one, Bosses, includes events focused on people who played a significant part in the development of the executive. In most cases the role model was the manager's superior. These experiences varied substantially, in terms of the type of relationship or interaction, the length of the association, and the characteristics of the superior.

The relationships with the special people lasted anywhere from a brief period to several years. Some of the experiences involved observing the boss's behavior with others, such as noting how the boss treats others, or how she or he handles a political situation during an important meeting. Most of the role-model events were longer term, spanning the length of the reporting relationship. These usually entailed direct involvement with the superior.

There were three types of Bosses described: good, bad, and flawed. For both men and women, the majority described were good bosses; about one-third were bad bosses; and a handful were flawed bosses. The good bosses, remembered with affection, were described as having positive attributes and skills.

> My boss was an excellent one-on-one communicator and a superb businessman.
>
> Encouraging, enthusiastic, caring, best person I ever worked for.

These types of statements were heard over and over in descriptions of these exceptional bosses.

Negative role models, on the other hand, usually represented very unpleasant experiences for the manager.

> My boss was very insecure. He felt threatened by smart people who worked for him. He would make your life miserable instead of helping you to develop. He withheld information, wouldn't take me to meetings when the topic was something I was working on and he couldn't explain what went on. Not only did he interfere with my growth, but with my day-to-day work on top of everything else.

Bosses of the third type, flawed role models, had both positive and negative traits. They showed strengths which the manager admired, but their weaknesses occasionally led to their derailment.

> I watched my manager and others' reactions to her. I saw how effective she was with some people and dysfunctional with others. I saw what worked and what didn't. She's very smart and knows how to get what she wants, but she's got a very sharp, quick tongue that she uses when she feels threatened.

Values Playing Out. Values Playing Out is the second type of other-people event. This event is different from Bosses events in that it is a short-lived episode from which values or morals can be drawn. In a Values Playing Out event, the manager either observes or plays a part in a very positive or very negative situation that entails a person or persons doing something to another person or persons. These vignettes had lasting impact on the manager, and resulted in behaviors for the manager to model or avoid. One woman told us:

> Early in my career I was a clerk moving ahead rapidly. A man with the same skill was hired at more money. I asked my boss why, and he responded, "He was hired for potential." I thought, "So I was not?!" Then I knew I had to start fighting for recognition. Two years later I passed by the male clerk. It was significant to me, and I learned that perception is extremely important. Politics means getting others to recognize your potential.

We know that other people were central in the experience of women in our sample. The interviews conducted with senior executives in Morrison et al. (1987) showed that every successful female general manager was described by senior executives from her company as having had significant sponsorship from upper management. This help was sometimes in the form of a lasting mentoring relationship, but usually it involved access to the advice, counsel, support, or feedback from more than one superior, including her own manager. Although 100 percent of the successful women had had some form of help from above, only 38 percent of the women who had derailed were described as having had such help.

When we looked at the events involving other people, we found a significant ($p<.05$) difference between women and men in their reporting of Bosses events (see Table 4). Half of all women reported at least one event focused on learning from another person, compared to only 18 percent of all male managers. The percent of male and female managers reporting Values Playing Out events was not significantly different.

There are several possible explanations for the large difference in the Bosses event category. First, these women may have had more direct help from senior executives than did the men. Although the women were often excluded from some of the informal

Table 4

Percent of Managers Reporting Other People As Key Developmental Events

	Men (N=189)		Women (N=78)
Bosses	18.0	**	51.3
Values Playing Out	23.8		30.8

** $p < .05$

activities which enable up-and-coming male middle managers to rub shoulders with higher level executives, the women may have gotten more on-the-job exposure to senior-level executives who were interested in promoting their success.

We mentioned above that establishing credibility was a major theme for these women. Kanter (1977) pointed out that while the presence of tokens is frequently noticed, their achievements are often overlooked. The majority of the good bosses described by women in our sample were characterized as having facilitated a boost in credibility by visibly demonstrating faith in the women's abilities and letting others know that the manager had his or her vote of confidence.

In addition to helping her prove herself to others, the good bosses had a tremendous impact on the manager's confidence. They nudged and pushed her to accept challenges, take on more responsibility, and grow and develop as an executive. They encouraged risk-taking, helped her get promoted, gave her challenging assignments. One role model watched out for the manager over a four-year period, and once when he thought she had gone into an area with no potential, he engineered three different offers for her. There were several women who, when questioning their own direction or struggling with a tough assignment, had superiors who served as cheerleaders, telling and showing them, "I believe in you. You can do it!" It was not uncommon to hear the women say things such as:

> I never thought of myself as high potential before.

> It's hard for me to accept that management views me as a potential officer of the company.

Support from others may be especially critical for women promoted into high-level jobs during or before their early forties. Robertson (1990) compared psychological profiles of upper-level men and women and found that among 30- and 40-year-olds, women tended to have a significantly lower sense of psychological well-being than men. Self-reported feelings of well-being, however, did not differ among 50-year-old male and female upper-level managers. Either women become more comfortable as they get older and spend more time in organizations or the women who feel less able to cope leave organizations by their mid-forties.

For the women in our sample, relationships with significant others tended to enhance their learning environment. From these supportive bosses, women learned several lessons, including *Shouldering Full Responsibility*, *Innovative Problem-solving Methods*, and *Developing Other People*. Apparently their experience with bosses who had helped them gain acceptance, credibility, and self-confidence caused them to focus special attention on being an effective developer of other people. The women talked about the importance of giving rewards and recognition to subordinates, trying to give them stretching experiences while making expectations clear, and actively seeking ways for employees to grow. For example:

> He was one of the best people I ever worked for. He had high expectations, creativity; he gave me rope and room to maneuver. He gave me my first management job and helped me understand the differences between worker and supervisor. He put me on task forces that were very difficult for me. This resulted in my gaining confidence and recognition. This was a period of high growth, recognition and challenge for me. A whole set of skills came out of this period—writing well, project management, negotiation skills, communication at all levels of the corporation, how to balance priorities, people management.

For men, Other People events do not serve as primary sources of the same kinds of lessons. Lindsey et al. (1987) reported that "by observing and interacting with these people, executives internalized values regarding appropriate and ethical behavior to be expected from a manager" (p. 153). They learned "the importance of integrity and the consequences of insensitivity" (p. 153). The three lessons for which Bosses is a primary source for men are *Basic Management Values* (for instance, integrity), *Sensitivity to the Human Side of Management*, and *What Executives Are Like*. Examples of men's learnings from Bosses are:

> Be sensitive in using power—domination stifles creativity. Don't make people feel at risk for asking questions or disagreeing. People need to know the strategy behind the specifics.

It may be that these women were more inclined to report learning from other people than were men because they had less diversity of assignment experience on which to draw. Yet there is a growing body of research and theoretical literature which suggests that women may be more inclined to learn from other people under any circumstances. Carol Gilligan (1982), Nancy Chodorow (1978), and Jean Baker Miller (1976), in their attempts to understand gender differences in human development, have maintained that women tend to see themselves in a context of human relationships and connectedness, whereas men tend to focus on separation, autonomy, and individual achievement. Gilligan (1982) explains that "male and female voices typically speak the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and empowers the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community" (p. 156). The belief that women learn more from other people is further supported in Miller's (1976) statement that "women stay with, build on, and develop in a context of attachment and affiliation with others" (p. 169). Although our analyses can show the differences between events men and women reported as developmental, future research will have to address more fully the reasons behind these differences. However, women's focus on relationships doesn't end at this point but reappears in the arena to which we now turn, Hardships, in the event we call Personal Trauma.

Hardships

The final class of developmental experiences reported by both men and women is one we call Hardships. These are difficult or traumatic experiences. On the job, people had to deal with problem employees, had made significant mistakes, or had pulled out of a career rut or lousy job. Off the job, they had endured personal traumas which had great impact on them as managers. The executives related five main types of Hardships: Career Setbacks, Changing Jobs, Personal Trauma, Employee Performance Problems, and Business Mistakes. (See the Appendix for full definitions of each of these.)

Hardships provided a wealth of learning opportunities for the executives, most of which evoked an awareness of self and a different perspective on career and life. Hardships gave these managers perspective because they were forced to introspect. They stepped away and discovered what was important to them in terms of their careers and personal lives, what their limits and weaknesses were as managers, and what they valued as appropriate managerial behavior. In terms of their organizations, they learned that politics prevail and cannot be ignored; they learned how to deal with executives in various contexts; and they learned the importance of being sensitive to and dealing appropriately with people who are important to their success. Finally, they learned that they could handle the responsibility, be in control of their careers, and formulate strategies for coping when situations appear to be out of control. They gained confidence in themselves from persevering through the setbacks, failures, and traumas. Learning from Hardships provided a balance for both women and men, adding humility, direction, and sensitivity.

As in the other arenas, men and women reported most of the Hardship events with equal frequency. There are no statistically significant differences in the percent of men and women who reported Career Setbacks, Job Changes, Personal Traumas, or Employee Performance Problems (see Table 5). In fact, the only significant difference in the Hardship events these men and women reported was for the Business Mistakes category.

Business Mistakes. The Business Mistakes category includes any event which the manager perceived as a failure experience, such as product failures, failures to influence others, and

Table 5

Percent of Managers Reporting Hardships As Key Developmental Events

Mostly Similar . . .	Men (N=189)		Women (N=78)
• Career Setback	12.2		7.7
• Changing Jobs	10.6		17.9
• Personal Trauma	5.8		3.8
• Employee Performance Problems	10.6		19.2
But . . .			
• Business Mistakes	11.1	**	21.8

** $p < .05$

conflicts the manager had with peers or superiors. A significantly larger percentage ($p<.05$) of the women reported Business Mistakes as events that had been impactful on their development as managers. What follows are two examples of mistakes these women reported:

> I helped a woman who was going to do a presentation but couldn't because of a religious holiday. She said she'd put it together if I'd do the presentation. I offered to come in over the weekend but she said she had it under her control. I came in Sunday afternoon and nothing was done. I worked all afternoon and evening, my husband even helping me make graphs. It was adequate but not good.
>
> I got a promotion that made me responsible for selling work to people within the company. My boss told me about a part of the company that wanted a sales measurement/forecasting system. I hired a summer intern who'd put the program together—all I had to do was sell it. I sold it and then we found we couldn't do it. They actually wanted a simple

> answer to a very complex problem. It was awful—had to hire another company to do it for us. We all suffered.

Did these women actually make more mistakes than the men in our sample or were they more likely to talk about their mistakes? Did the lack of experience in other areas lead to more mistakes or did it bring mistakes closer to the top of the list when women are asked to talk about developmental experiences? Both of these explanations may contain some truth.

We know these women had not had the same opportunity as men to learn from a diversity of assignments. Diversity of experience is critical to the development of expertise (Horgan, 1989) and cognitive complexity (Bartunek & Louis, 1985). People with a narrower experience base are more likely to err as task complexity increases.

We should also stress that the majority of mistakes were not major product or business failures. The most common setback these executives had faced was not being able to sell an idea or project. Top management or their boss or colleagues were unswayed by their opinions on a staffing decision, a new sales strategy or a major reorganization (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1986). So we know that many of the mistakes the women reported reflect an inability, or a perceived inability, to influence decisions or strategy.

We also know these women were very conscious of their visibility as the first, and often the only, women at their level in these organizations, and visibility works to enhance performance pressures (Kanter, 1977; Morrison et al., 1987, 1986). They were intensely aware of the visibility of any mistake they might make and the possible impact it would have on the careers of women who would follow in their footsteps. As a result, they may have been more likely to agonize over their mistakes and to perceive them as significant learning events.

Women are also more likely to talk about their mistakes because they are less likely than men to attribute failure to bad luck (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974; Etaugh & Brown, 1975). These women all worked hard to succeed, so when they did not, they were more likely to attribute their failure to lack of skill rather than lack of effort. There is also some research that indicates women are more likely to see a perceived failure as a key event because they are less likely than men to have learned as a child that failure and loss can be survived. This theory suggests that the play of girls tends to focus on taking turns and improving rather than on direct competition and win/lose situations. So the women may have had less early opportunity to outgrow the childhood belief that loss or failure is disastrous (Jensen, 1987). Again, these dynamics probably work to enhance critical reflection and self-assessment.

Some of these issues appear to play out in what women reported learning from their mistakes. Business Mistakes was a primary source of learning for *Personal Limits and Blind Spots*, *Handling Political Situations*, and *How to Work With Executives*, for women as well as for men. Women also reported Business Mistakes as a primary source of the lesson, *Dealing With Conflict*.

For both men and women, Business Mistakes, like all other Hardships, tested the manager's will to succeed. While they were experiencing a personal trauma, pondering a career change, watching their product fail, or grappling with problem employees, they often asked themselves "Who am I, and where am I heading? Is this worth it? Can I live through these difficult times?" As we have seen, role models often helped them through.

Employee Performance Problems. The nature and frequency of the women's Employee Performance Problems do not appear to be much different from the situations the men report. Most of the cases, for men and for women, were inherited from a predecessor who did not deal with the problem; only one woman reported hiring the person she had to fire. All these situations were resolved through communication, counseling, or development; by transferring the individual to another area; or by firing the employee.

One woman, for instance, told about having to fire a former peer.

> I had watched him (drugs, prostitution), and knew more about him than my boss. I told him I knew, and he was good for a while, but did everything except his job. Then cutbacks came and the President suggested he was the likely one to go, but he and the V.P. would be out of town and thought I could handle it. I was very nervous. He took it well, though.

Women reported Employee Performance Problems as a primary source for more lessons than did men. We believe that the difference is due, again, to the lack of assignment diversity among these women. Dealing with problem employees is traumatic, but it is a basic everyday necessity of life as a manager. Because it is a management crisis which occurs on the job, it may be that women are able to derive lessons that are similar to those found in Assignments.

Career Setbacks and Changing Jobs. Although there was no greater probability that women would report Career Setbacks, Changing Jobs, or Personal Trauma as developmental events, we believe there is a quality difference in the nature of the events these women reported, which resulted in a somewhat different learning experience.

Forty-three percent of the women executives who reported having Career Setbacks believed that being a woman made a difference when passed over for a promotion. Some of the women thought that this was the primary reason that they were denied the promotion; others said it was not the major reason but thought that gender had some influence on the decision. For example:

> I was denied tenure at a large university. I was the first woman ever proposed for tenure. I had done all the right things, like publishing, and had support of the department. There was no reason given and no way to find out why—the committee meets behind closed doors. Several women's groups pressed me to appeal, but I decided it wasn't in my best interest. It wasn't worth it, would cost a lot of money, and take a lot of time. Besides, I'd be blackballed even if I won. I decided to leave the university.

Discrimination was not a factor in the Career Setbacks reported by men.

Although for both men and women job changes had to do with trading in successful careers to try something new, for women there tended to be an added element. Almost 20 percent of the women who reported Changing Jobs as a key event were making their decision partly based on the demands of child-rearing or single parenting. And for nearly another 20 percent, discrimination in the old job was a factor in the decision to seek something new.

Personal Trauma. The Personal Trauma events are crisis experiences that happen in managers' personal lives or on the job.

Neither men nor women were more likely to report these experiences as developmental. However, this event was a primary source of several different learnings for men and women because of the nature of the events reported by the two groups. Although men reported a diverse group of trauma experiences, including broken relationships, personal illness or injury, death, and combat duty, all Personal Traumas reported by women were broken relationships. An additional element which characterized many of these break-ups was the feeling of conflict between relationship demands and career.

> I was dating a guy and I didn't want to get promoted before he did. I told my boss "Please don't promote me yet." I succeeded in spite of myself.

As a result, men reported Personal Trauma as a primary source of a greater diversity of lessons, including *The Balance Between Work and Personal Life, Persevering Through Adversity,* and *Coping With Situations Beyond Your Control.* Women reported this experience as a primary source of only two lessons: *Sensitivity to the Human Side of Management* and *You Can't Manage Everything All Alone* (for example, workload and personal problems).

Discussion

Women may employ a different set of learning strategies or make sense of their experiences in ways that are qualitatively different from men. If so, our method in this study may not reveal the full meaning of the women's experience. In his work on critical reflection, Jack Mezirow (1990) says, "What we perceive and fail to perceive and what we think and fail to think are powerfully influenced by habits of expectation that constitute our frame of reference, that is, a set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret our experiences." Although there is a good deal of literature suggesting that, by adulthood, women and men in general may have different habits of expectation or different frames of reference (for instance, Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarak, 1986; Hoy, 1989), there is also a good deal of literature suggesting that the psychological profiles of women who succeed in positions of executive leadership may be more like those of their male counterparts than they are like those of women in general (for instance, Howard & Bray, 1988; Morrison et al., 1987; Powell, 1988; Nieva & Gutek, 1981). It is not the purpose of this paper to draw conclusions about these larger issues, but we are aware of their implications and have touched on them throughout the interpretation of our results.

These women's opportunity for learning from a diversity of assignments was limited even though they learned a great deal from their organizational experiences. Women reported fewer business turnarounds than did their male peers and no start-from-scratch assignments. In addition, the nature and scope of some of the women's other assignments were more limited than the men's and their assignment progression was often less orderly.

Although a manager's tendency to learn from Assignments and Hardships does not appear to be gender-related, the capacity of the women to learn from Other People is remarkable. Part of this capacity may be an artifact of the lack of opportunity to learn from assignments, but when half of the women report learning from Other People, it suggests that more than just methodological artifact is at work.

The gender differences in the frequency of learnings are remarkable, as well. Reflective learnings about self and about self in relation to the organization abound in the top third of all lessons women report. In contrast, how-to learnings focusing on skill mastery abound in the top third for the men.

Reflective self-assessment is a natural and healthy reaction to challenge. Although the direct challenge from assignments may have been lower for these women, their overall challenge to succeed was more complex, because they were the first and only women at the general management level. As such, the visibility they experienced often enhanced their success. Yet working in the limelight, often under the stress of acting as representatives of all women, was an additional challenge posed to these managers. It was one that sometimes made reasonable risk-taking difficult. Another challenge was maintaining good peer relations despite the sometimes inappropriate visibility experienced by women at the executive level.

Challenge can help or hurt development, depending on the amount and the context of that challenge. Too much, too soon can hurt. Responsible managers have known that for years. Neither women nor men should be put into positions before they are ready, and women may be more vulnerable in organizations who try hard to promote and develop women. But our data show that many organizations in the past may have been too cautious in their treatment of women. Insufficient challenge can ruin the career of otherwise talented people who are judged too narrow at an advanced stage of their careers. Both men and women derail for this reason. In addition, recent studies have shown that when job challenge is not maintained the capable women will leave to seek it elsewhere (Tashjian, 1988).

The best mix seems to be peak challenge combined with ample support, which is what many of the women in our sample seemed to have by virtue of their role as organizational pioneers, rather than by direct design. Because these women were the first at their level, their managers and higher level executives had a personal stake in their success. The support and encouragement provided by senior executives was crucial to the women in breaking new organizational ground. Good bosses, sponsors, and mentors were both a major factor in the success of these women and a major source of learning for them.

As women have become more numerous at lower and middle levels in organizations, people come to believe that data such as these are less relevant; that large numbers at lower levels will cause the cream to rise. As a result, special efforts to support and encourage the development of women may decrease. Our research leads us to believe this would be a serious mistake. People responsible for the development and promotion of women need to remain sensitive to the delicate position of people who are breaking a "glass ceiling." These boundary-breakers are bound to be visible and that visibility, like many developmental opportunities, is both "learningful" and treacherous. It is crucial that they be recognized, not for their uniqueness but for their achievements.

Women continue to face greater ambivalence and uncertainty than men in organizations. Our collective idea of what constitutes a good manager remains essentially a male image, leaving women the task of learning to identify which gender-appropriate behaviors and attitudes to assimilate. This ambiguity continues to exist side-by-side with greater acceptance of the appropriateness of high-level organizational roles for women. Both women and men question what individuals or organizations can expect from women, given their different role sets and whatever differences, real or imagined, may lurk in their backgrounds or genes.

It should not be forgotten that women are not the only ones facing these difficulties. Today we are dealing with the strategic necessity of integrating into executive ranks significant numbers of Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. Many of the ideas generated by our comparison of men and women may be relevant to members of these minority groups as well (Thomas, 1990).

Despite these efforts, we may never be able to predict with certainty whether members of one group will develop in exactly the same ways as members of another group from any one assignment or mentoring relationship. This is because people with different backgrounds may draw different kinds of meaning from similar experiences. It would be a waste of time and energy, however, to dwell on that, to the exclusion of action, any more than we dwell on the fact that each individual, regardless of race or gender, derives something unique from each potentially developmental event. Equal developmental opportunity may never amount to equivalent experience, but we need to ensure its availability and then learn to take advantage of the rich diversity it will produce.

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APPENDIX

Appendix

This section presents charts which compare the men's and women's data on all sixteen event categories and thirty-three lesson categories. These data are presented in several ways.

Section I contains the overall ranking of lessons for men and women and the overall distribution of key events, represented by the percent of managers reporting each event type. If the reader wants to know how many women report a certain kind of event (Job Changes, for example), as compared to the percent of men reporting that event, this table is the place to look. Here, as elsewhere in this report, chi-square tests of significance were conducted, and asterisks represent statistical significance levels of at least .05. Data on three events not discussed in the text (Purely Personal, Coursework, and Early Work) are included with other data in this Appendix.

One caution, however: These data capture what people reported as their most significant experiences, rather than the sum total of all their experiences. So, the reporting frequencies may or may not be the same as the actual frequencies of occurrence. For example, women don't report significantly more job changes than men. That means a job change is not seen as more significant among women than it is among men. It does not necessarily mean women don't change jobs more frequently than men (or vice versa). In some cases, however, these reporting frequencies may reflect the actual structure of opportunity. For example, women report virtually no start-from-scratch assignments. This type of assignment is so powerful that we would argue these women were probably not getting those assignments in the same proportion as men, since it is unlikely that a powerful and difficult assignment, if experienced, would not be seen as key.

Section II compares the primary sources of each lesson for men and women. An event is a primary source of a lesson under one of two conditions: (1) when the event was one of the three most frequently reported sources of the specified learning, or (2) when the event/lesson association occurred more than would be predicted by chance ($p < .05$).

These tables show the frequency of a specific event's occurrence (at least one) as a source of a particular lesson. For example, on the first of these tables (First Supervisory Job), the 13.3 beside the solid bar for "managing boss" means that 13.3% of the men's First Supervisory Job events had one or more *Managing Former Bosses and Peers* lessons associated with it. The cross-hatched bar shows that 23.5% of the women's First Supervisory Job events had at least one *Managing Former Bosses and Peers* lesson associated with it. If the reader wants to know where men and women tend to learn particular lessons, turn to these tables.

Section III compares the major lessons from each event for men and women. These tables contain the same data as those in the previous section, but they are arranged differently to show the primary sources of each lesson. If the reader wants to know which lessons that both men and women report from an event, which lessons are reported primarily by men and which lessons are reported primarily by women, turn to these sixteen tables. These tables can give a sense of the relative impact of an event for men and for women. Some events have more lessons reported by men than by women, whereas others clearly have been more significant in the development of women.

Another word of caution: The male/female differences in the frequency of lessons should not necessarily imply any difference in the actual process by which men and women learn. Men and women may report different learning from an event because the event is qualitatively different for men and women. That is, women may tend to get a smaller version of the same event (an assignment, for example), or the event (assignment) may have a somewhat different set of salient characteristics when it is given to a woman.

Section IV presents an index of definitions for all event and lesson categories.

SECTION I

Lesson Rankings and Event Distributions

LESSONS IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY

MEN	WOMEN
Directing and Motivating Employees	Self-confidence
Self-confidence	Directing and Motivating Employees
Basic Management Values	Personal Limits and Blind Spots
Technical/Professional Skills	Handling Political Situations
Understanding Other People's Perspectives	Dealing With People Over Whom You Have No Authority
All About the Business	Taking Charge of Career
Coping With Ambiguous Situations	Recognizing and Seizing Opportunities
Dealing With People Over Whom You Have No Authority	Understanding Other People's Perspectives
Handling Political Situations	Coping With Situations Beyond Your Control
Shouldering Full Responsibility	Basic Management Values
How to Work With Executives	Knowing What Excites You
Persevering Through Adversity	How to Work With Executives
Sensitivity to the Human Side of Management	Shouldering Full Responsibility
Being Tough When Necessary	Persevering Through Adversity
Personal Limits and Blind Spots	What Executives Are Like
Strategic Thinking	Dealing With Conflict

MEN	WOMEN
Innovative Problem-solving Methods	Sensitivity to the Human Side of Management
Coping With Situations Beyond Your Control	The Balance Between Work and Personal Life
Strategies of Negotiation	Developing Other People
Knowing What Excites You	Strategic Thinking
Confronting Employee Performance Problems	Getting People to Implement Solutions
Taking Charge of Career	Technical/Professional Skills
What Executives Are Like	You Can't Manage Everything All Alone
Getting People to Implement Solutions	Confronting Employee Performance Problems
Building and Using Structure and Control Systems	All About the Business
Developing Other People	Being Tough When Necessary
Dealing With Conflict	Building and Using Structure and Control Systems
Managing Former Bosses and Peers	Managing Former Bosses and Peers
The Balance Between Work and Personal Life	Innovative Problem-solving Methods
You Can't Manage Everything All Alone	Coping With Ambiguous Situations
Recognizing and Seizing Opportunities	Strategies of Negotiation
Use (and Abuse) of Power	Use (and Abuse) of Power
Management Models	Management Models

Percent of Managers Reporting Events

		Men (N=189)		Women (N=78)
Assignments	First Supervisory Job	15.9		21.8
	Managing a Larger Scope	40.7		42.3
	Project/Task Force Assignments	28.6		20.5
	Turning a Business Around	29.6	*	6.4
	Line to Staff Switches	6.9		2.6
	Starting From Scratch	16.9	*	0.0
Hardships	Career Setback	12.2		7.7
	Changing Jobs	10.6		17.9
	Personal Trauma	5.8		3.8
	Employee Performance Problems	10.6		19.2
	Business Mistakes	11.1	*	21.8
Other People	Bosses	18.0	*	51.3
	Values Playing Out	23.8		30.8
Other Events	Purely Personal	8.5		10.3
	Coursework	18.5		12.8
	Early Work Experience	10.1		3.8

* $p < .05$

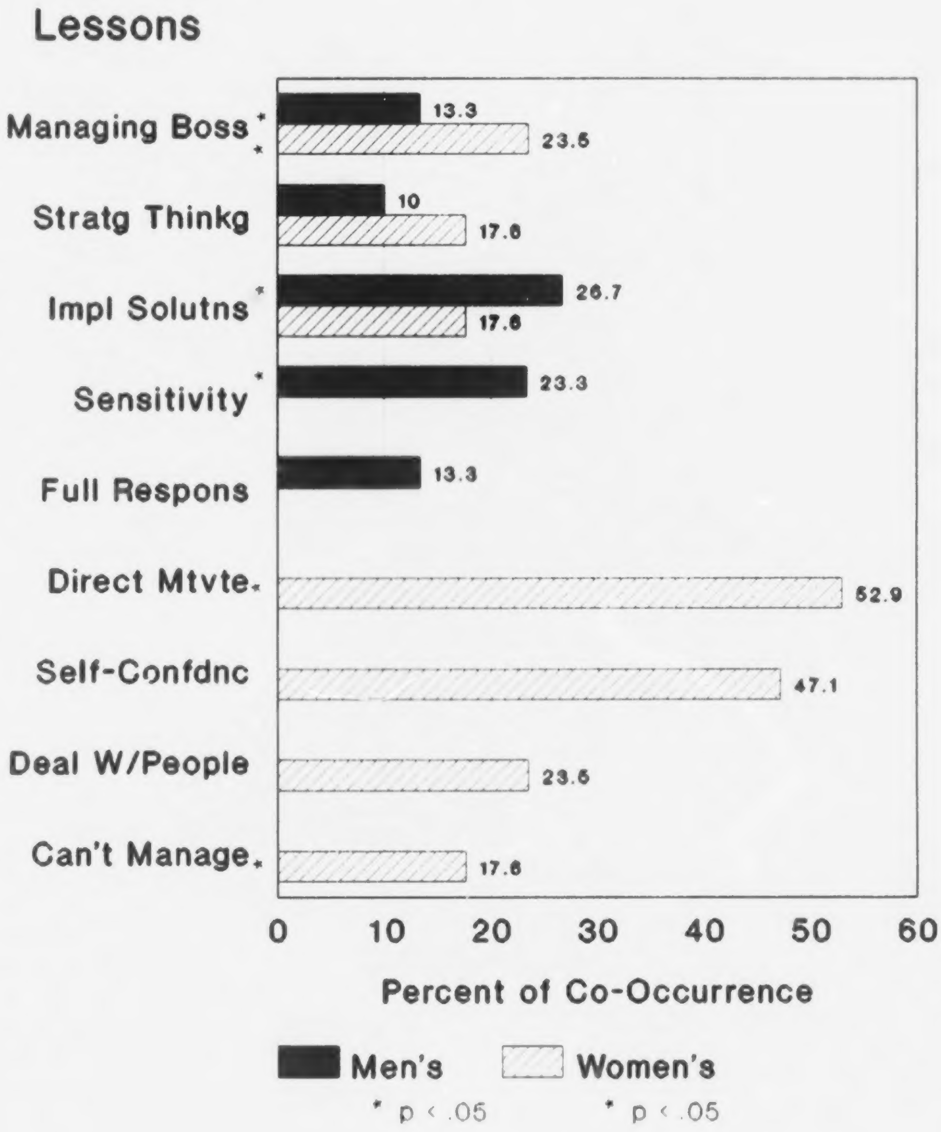
SECTION II

Key Events and Their Major Lessons

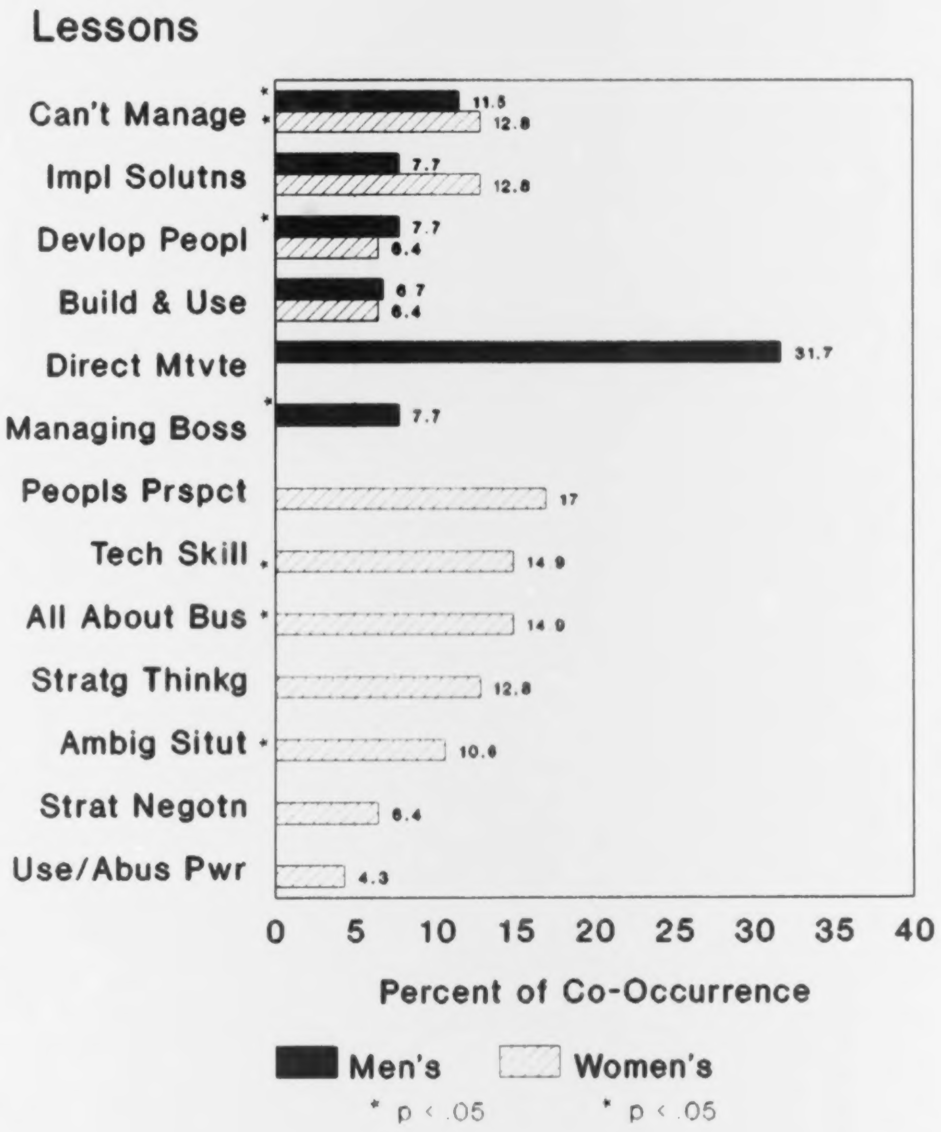
LESSON ABBREVIATIONS

All about Bus	All about the business one is in
Ambig Situt	Coping with ambiguous situations
Balnc Life&Wrk	The balance between work and personal life
Being Tough	Being tough when necessary
Build & Use	Building and using structure and control systems
Can't Manage	You can't manage everything all alone
Charge Career	Taking charge of your career
Cnfr Employee	Confronting employee performance problems
Coping	Coping with situations beyond your control
Deal W/Cnflct	Dealing with conflict
Deal W/People	Dealing with people over whom you have no authority
Devlop Peopl	Developing other people
Direct Mtvte	Directing and motivating employees
Execs Like	What executives are like
Full Respons	Shouldering full responsibility
How Wk Execs	How to work with executives
Impl Solutns	Getting people to implement solutions
Innov Problm	Innovative problem-solving methods
Managing Boss	Managing former bosses and peers
Mgmt Models	Management models
Mgmt Values	Basic management values
Peopls Prspct	Understanding other people's perspectives
Persevering	Persevering through adversity
Politics	Handling political situations
Prsnl Limits	Personal limits and blind spots
Seizing Oppor	Recognizing and seizing opportunities
Self-Confdnc	Self-confidence
Sensitivity	Sensitivity to the human side of management
Stratg Thinkg	Strategic thinking
Strat Negotn	Strategies of negotiation
Tech Skill	Technical/professional skills
Use/Abus Pwr	Use (and abuse) of power
What Excts U	Knowing what really excites you about work

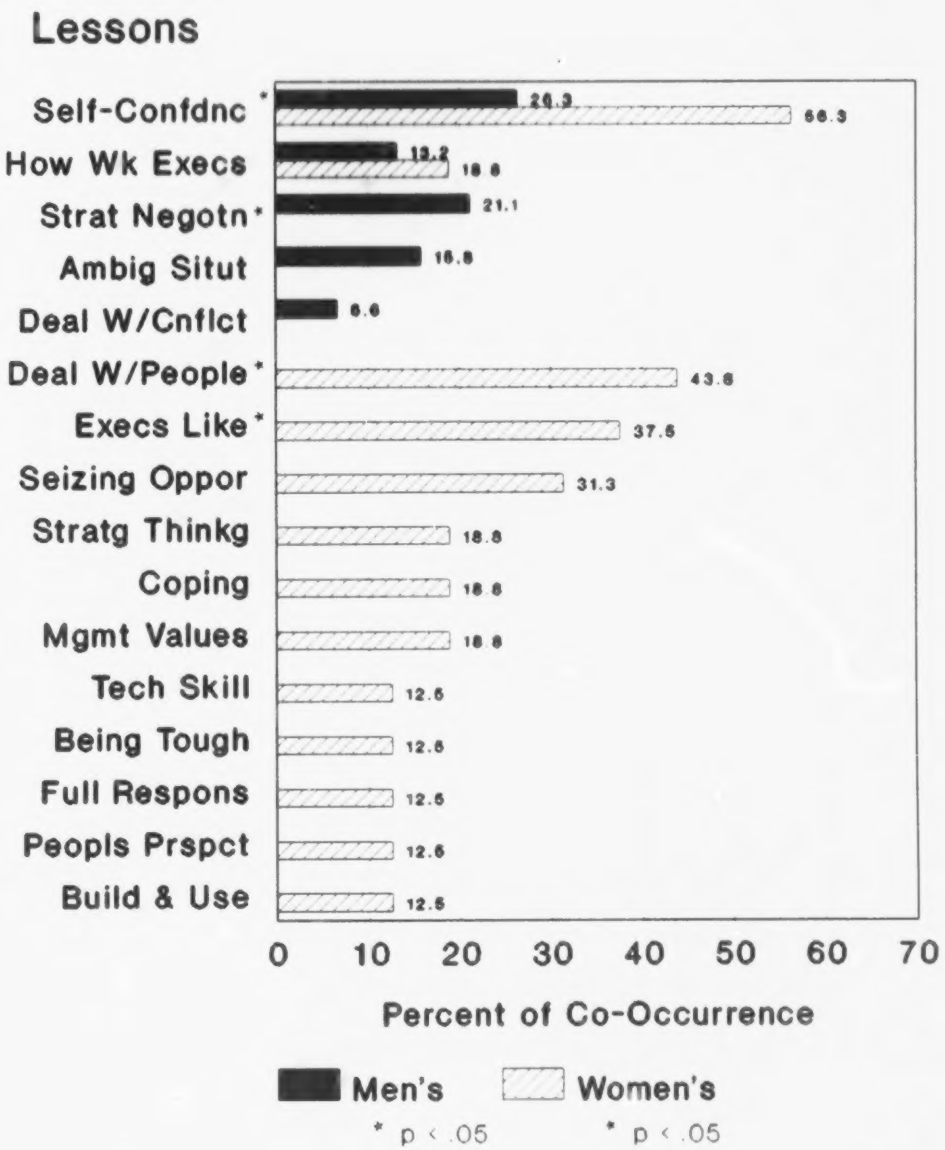
First Supervisory Job



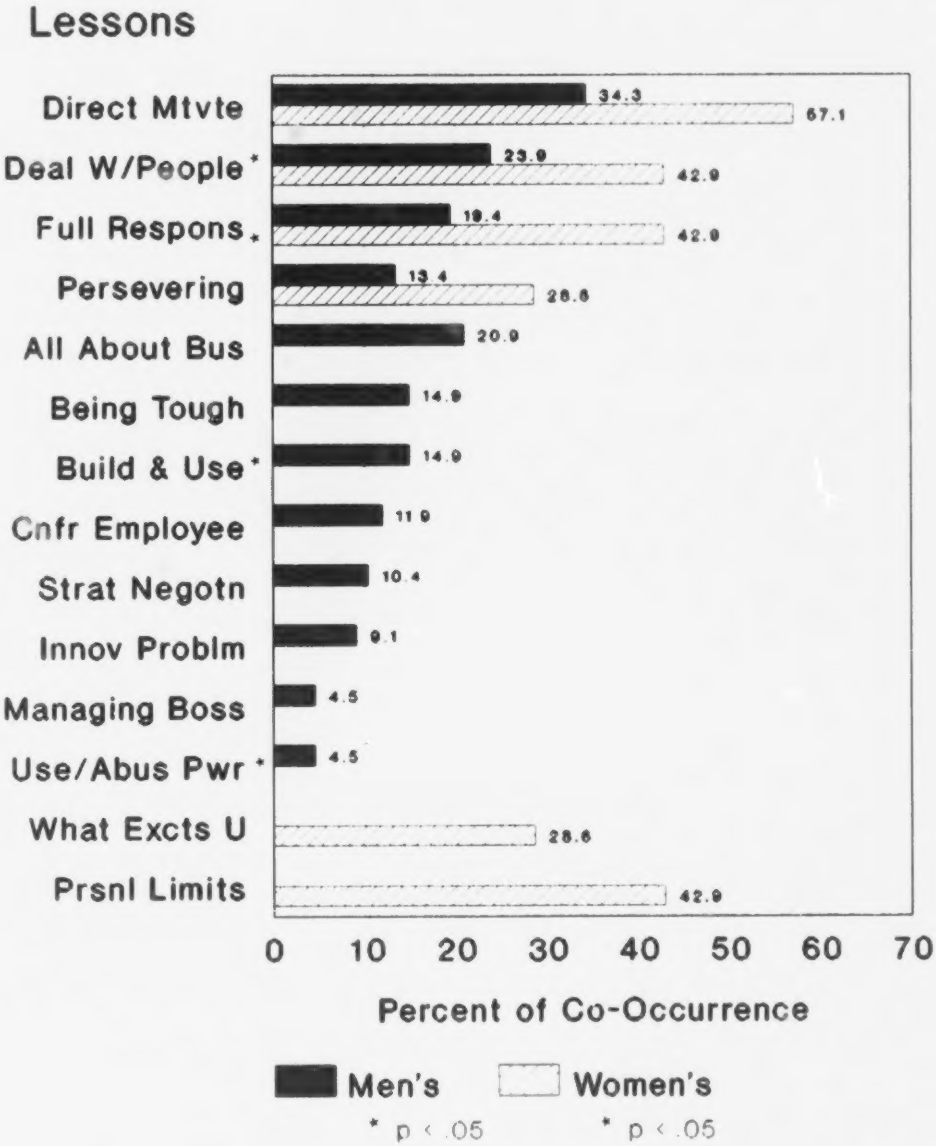
Managing A Larger Scope



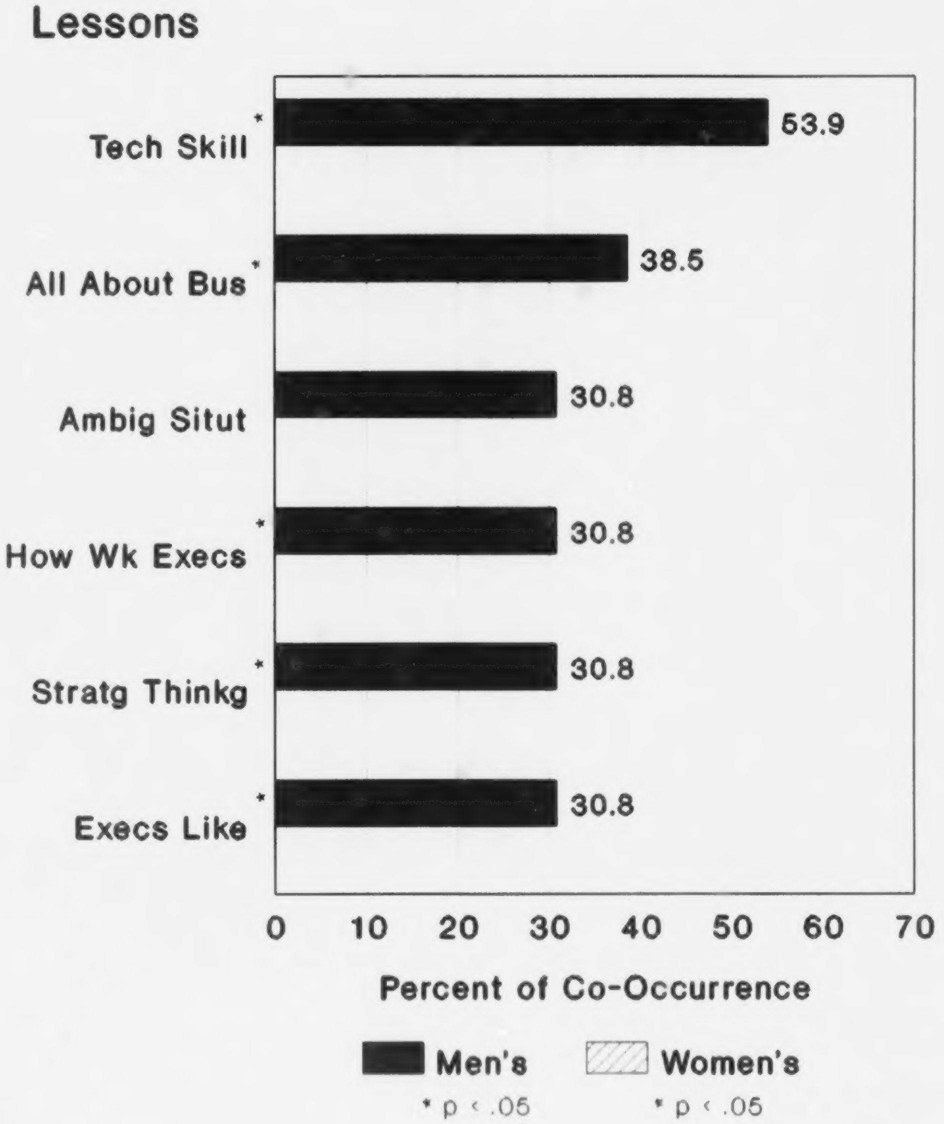
Project/Task Force Assignments



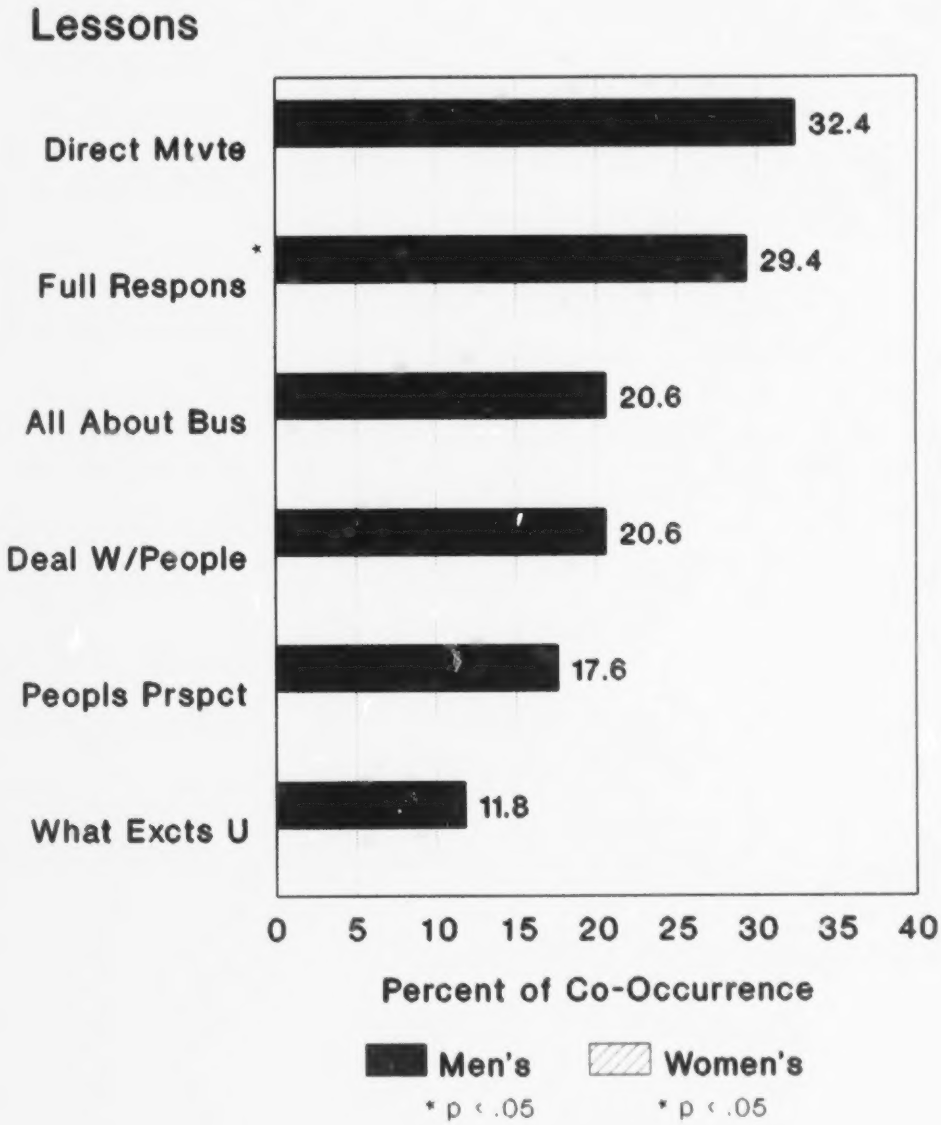
Turning A Business Around



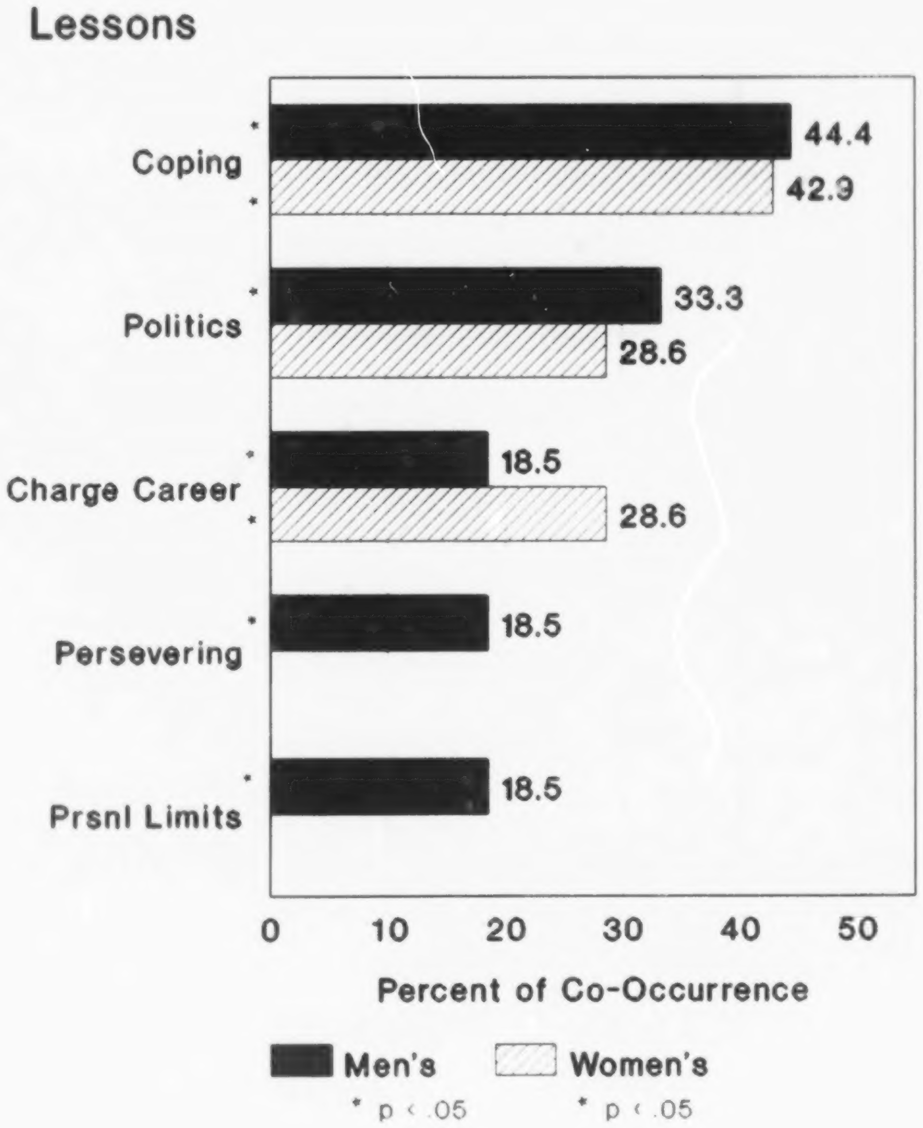
Line to Staff Switches



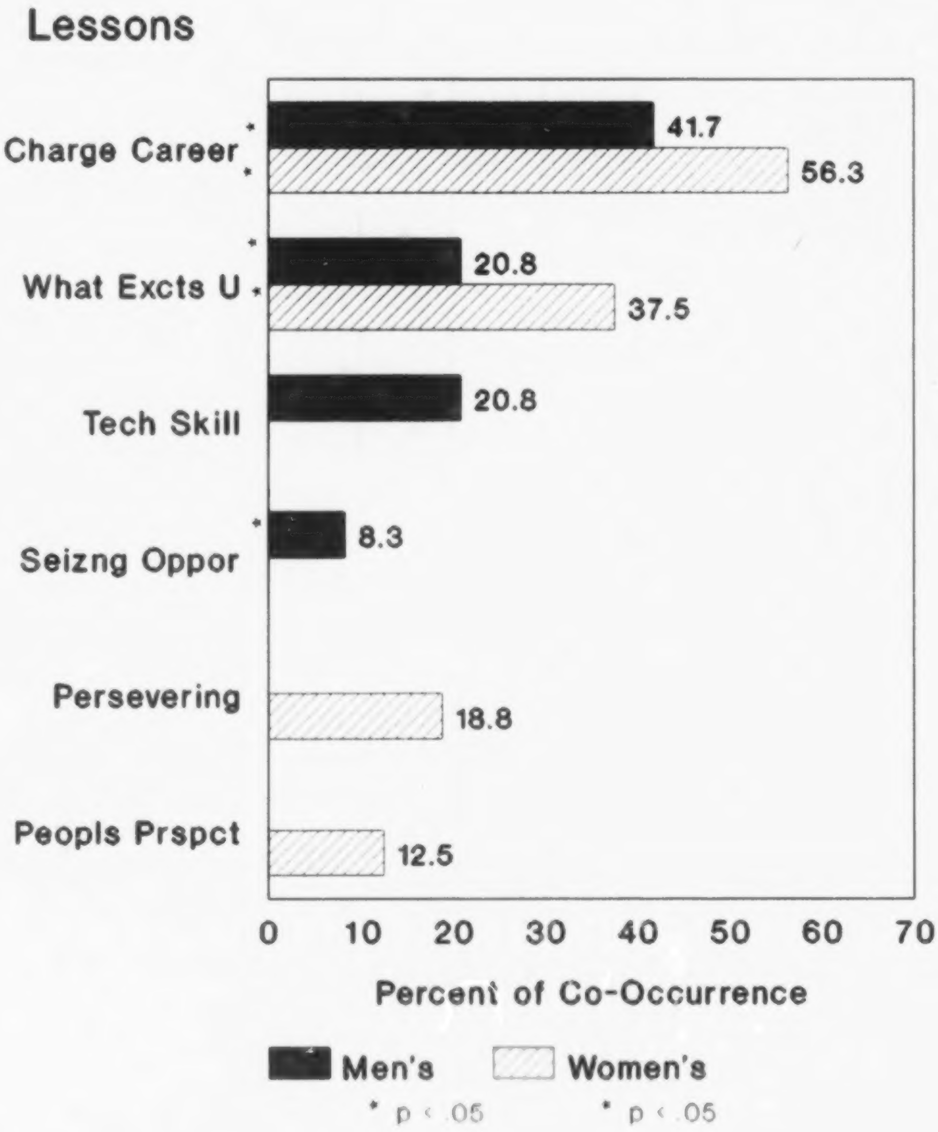
Starting From Scratch



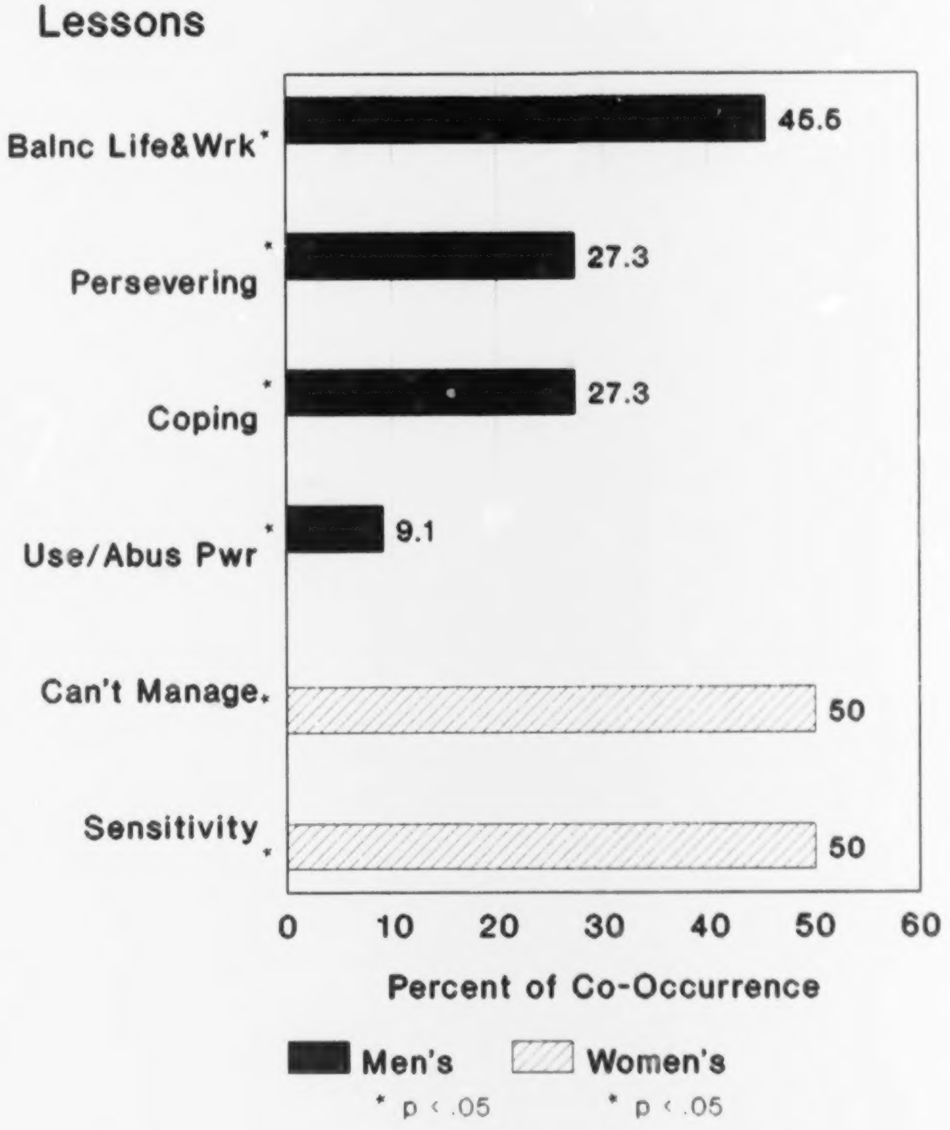
Career Setback



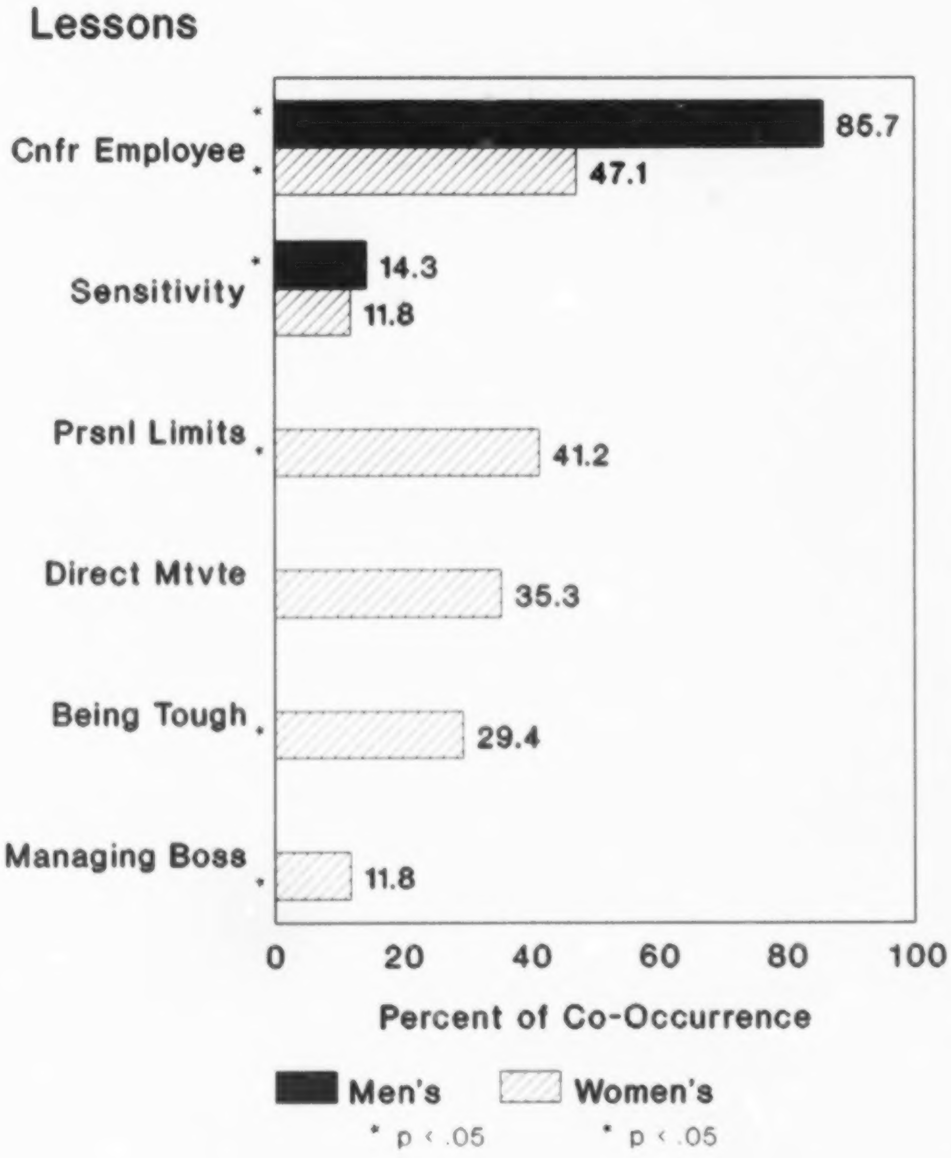
Changing Jobs



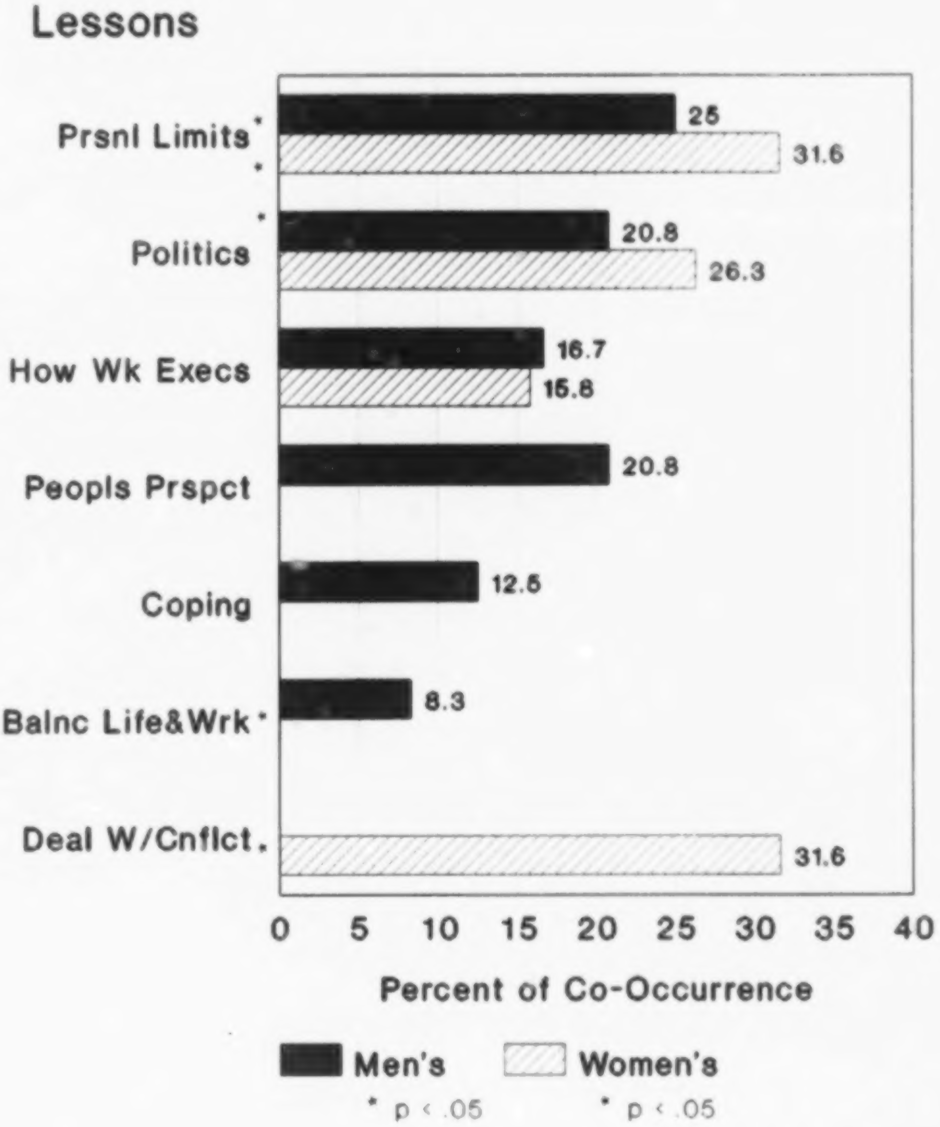
Personal Trauma



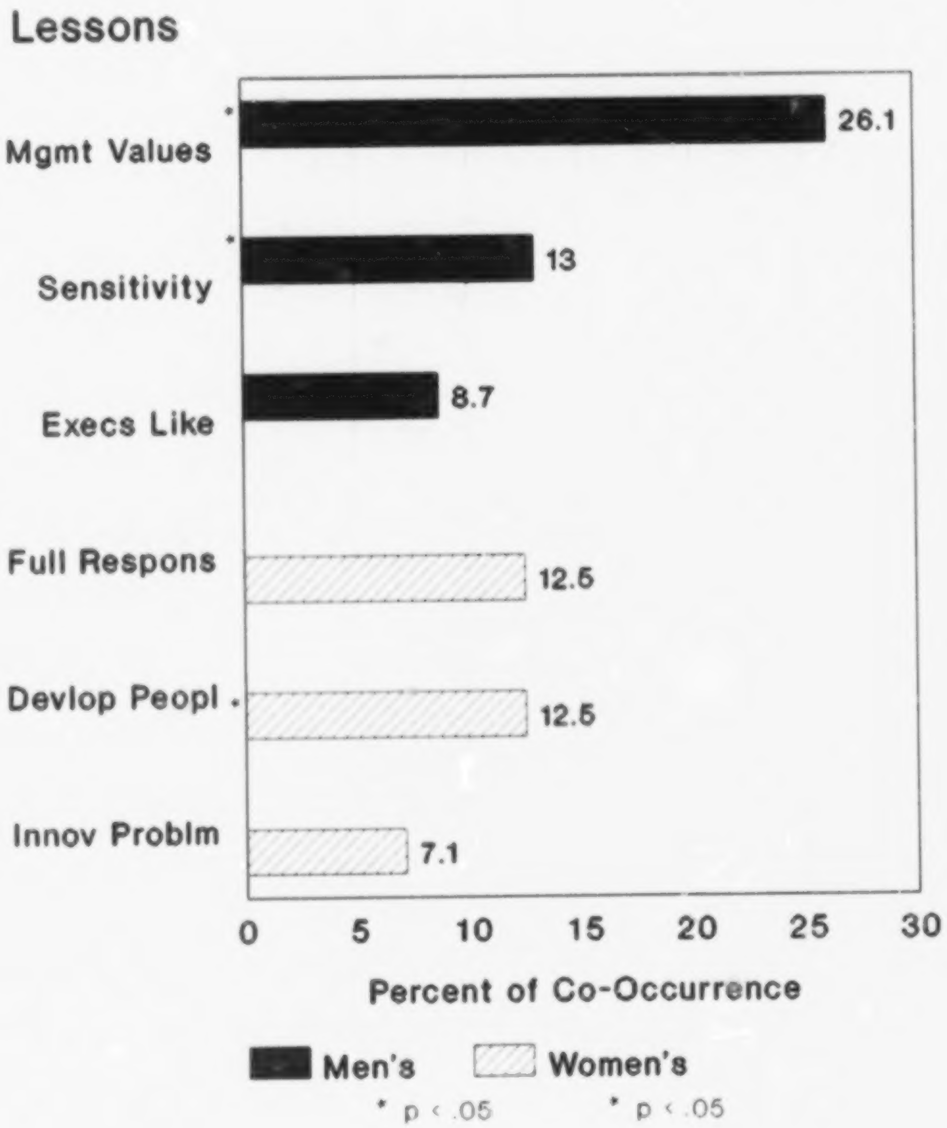
Employee Performance Problems



Business Mistakes



Bosses


Lessons
Mgmt Values *
26.1
Sensitivity *
13
Execs Like
8.7
Full Respons
12.5
Devlop Peopl *
12.5
Innov Problm
7.1
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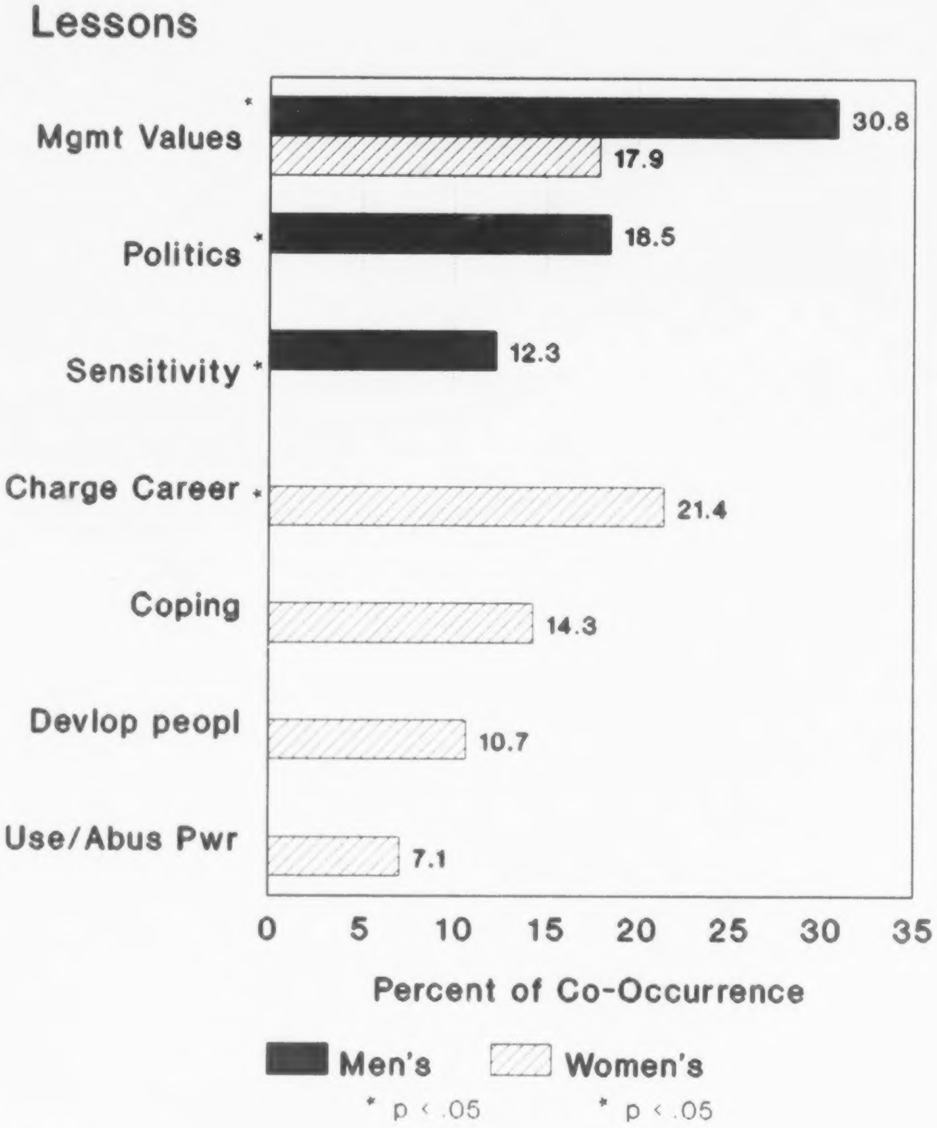
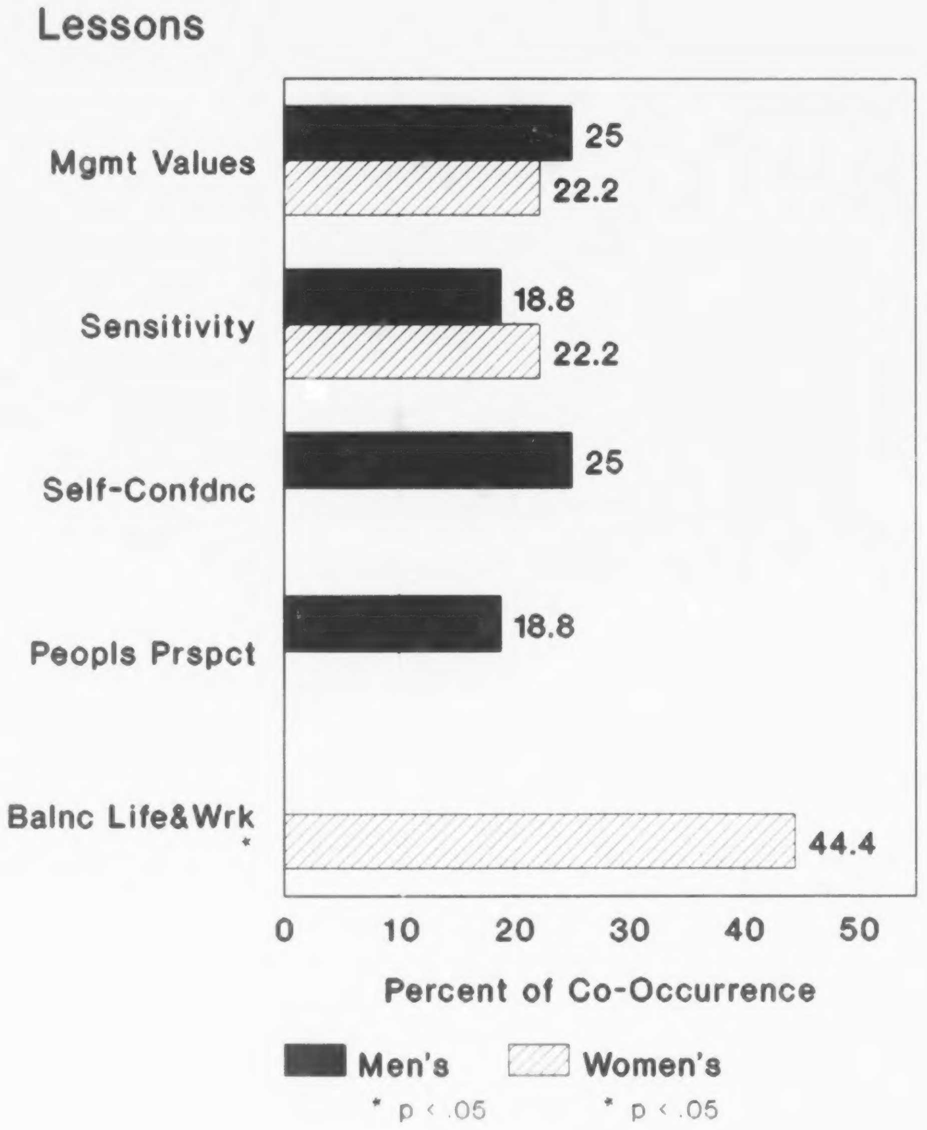
30
Percent of Co-Occurrence
Men's
Women's
* p < .05
* p < .05

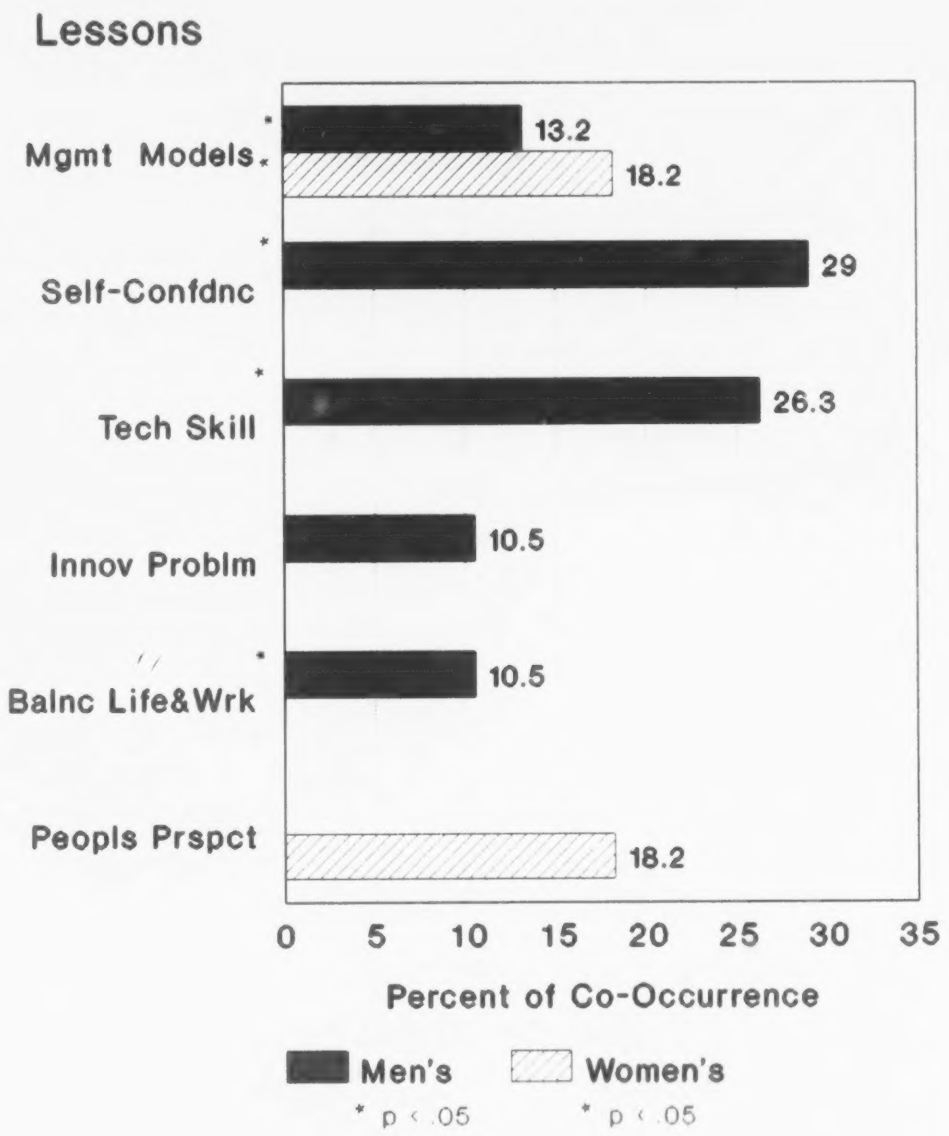
Values Playing Out



Purely Personal



Coursework


Lessons
Mgmt Models
Self-Confdnc
Tech Skill
Innov Problm
Balnc Life&Wrk
Peopls Prspct
13.2
18.2
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26.3
10.5
10.5
18.2
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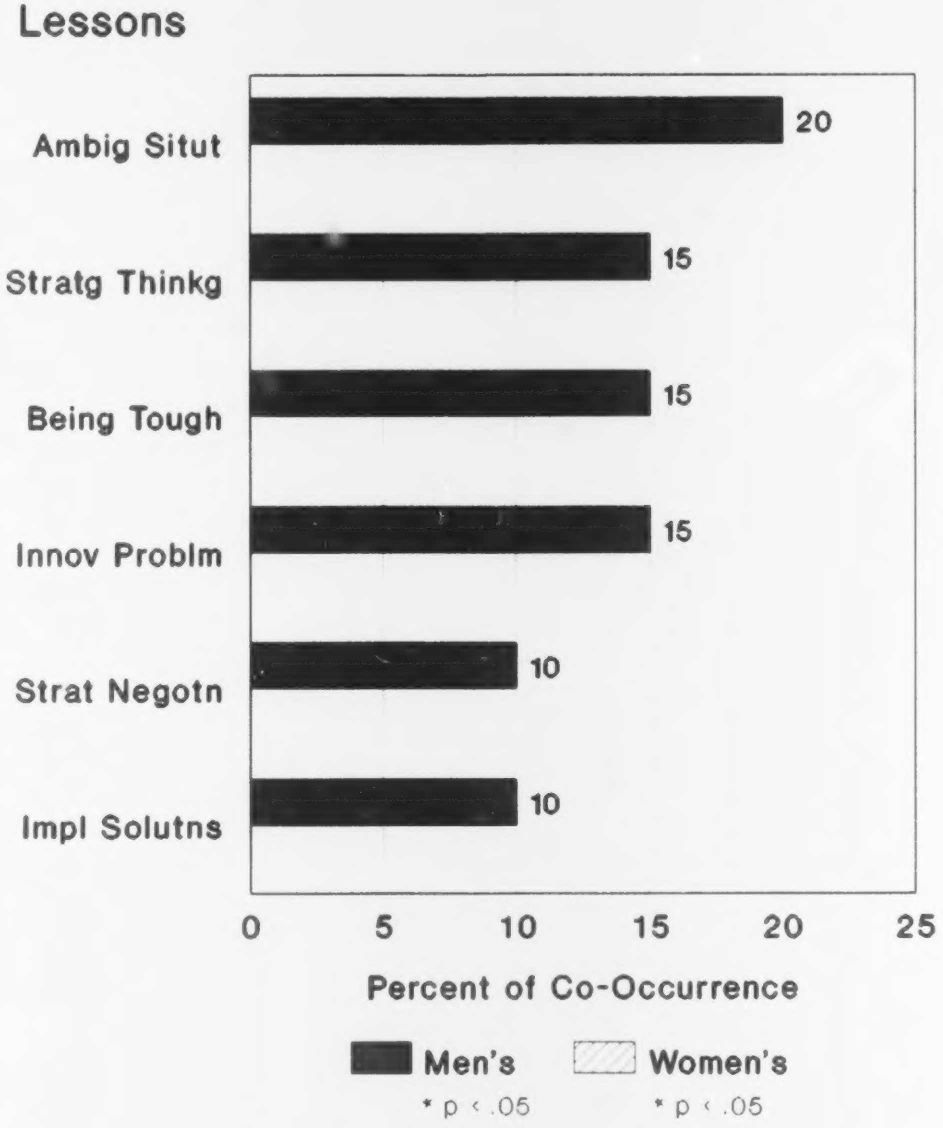
Percent of Co-Occurrence
Men's
Women's
* p < .05
* p < .05

Early Work Experience



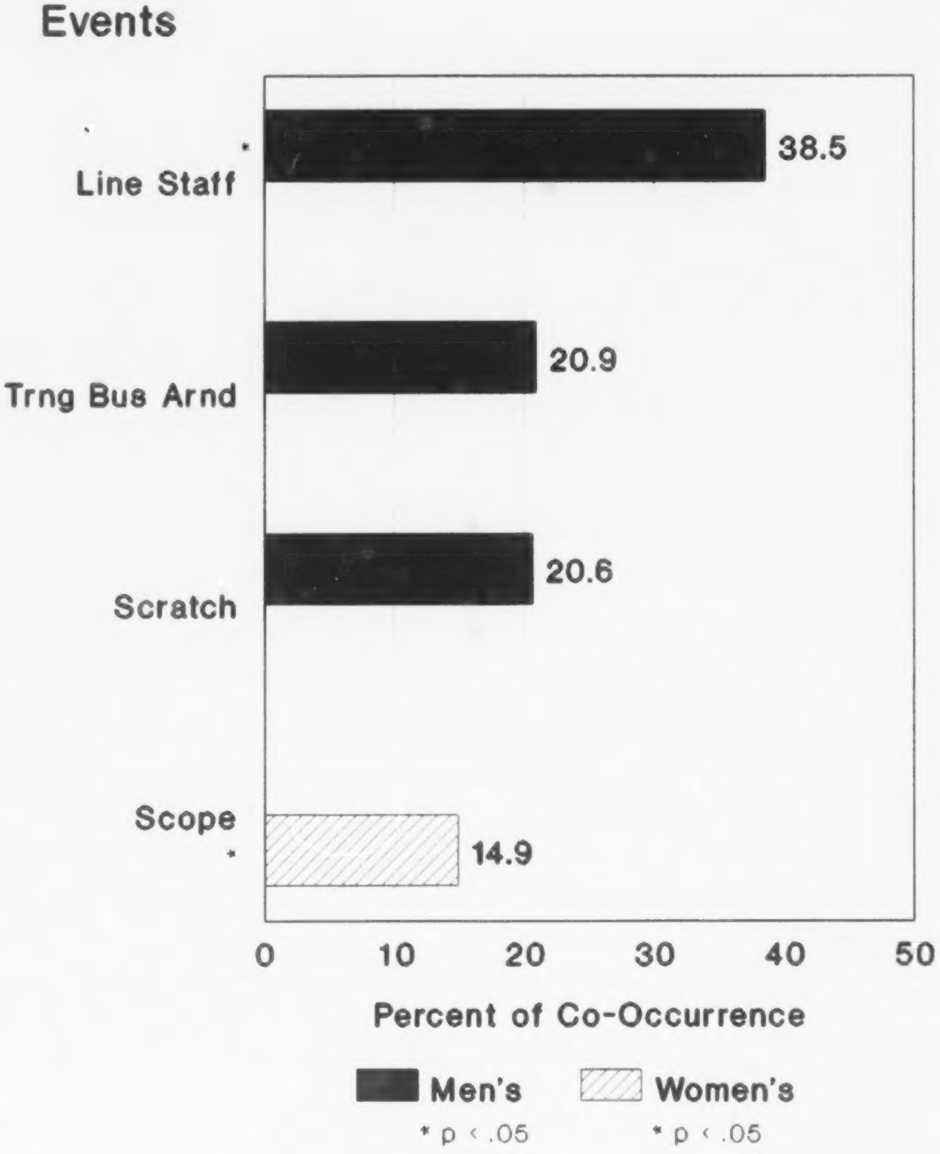
SECTION III

Lessons and Their Primary Sources

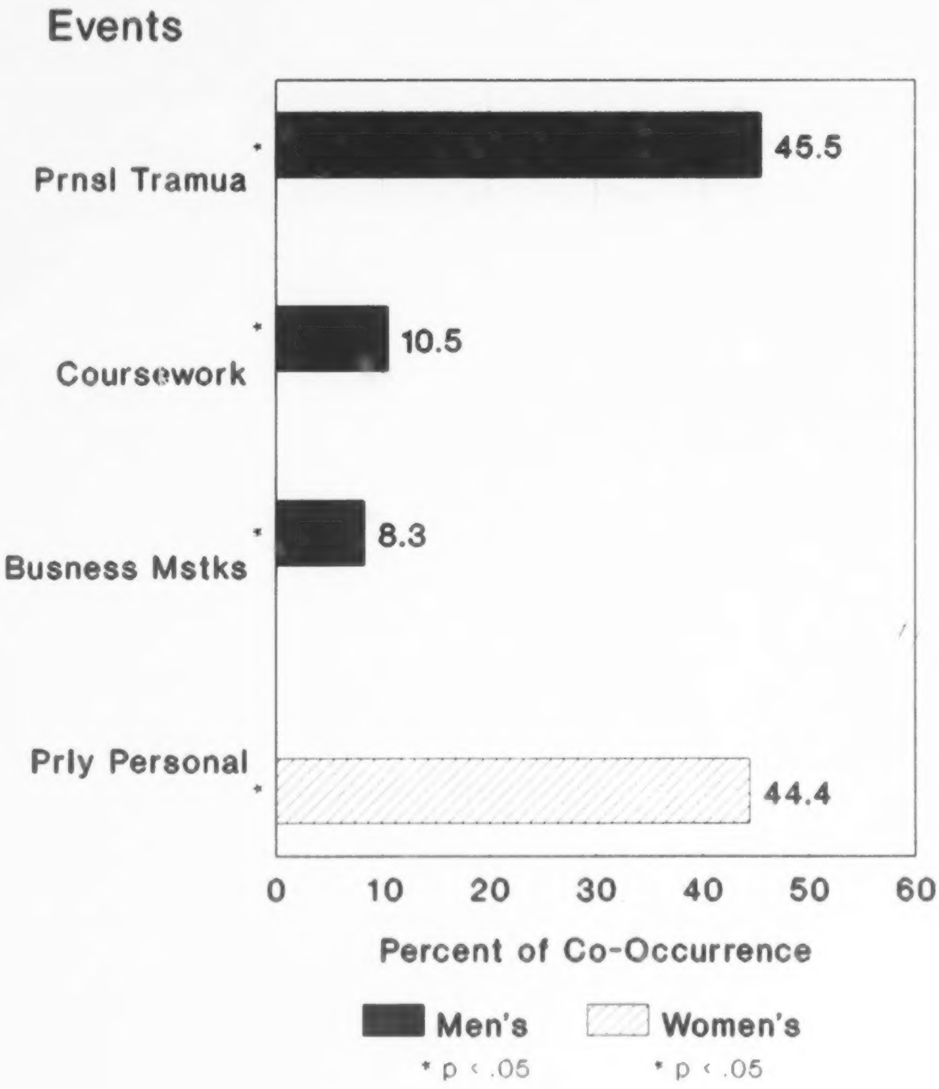
EVENT ABBREVIATIONS

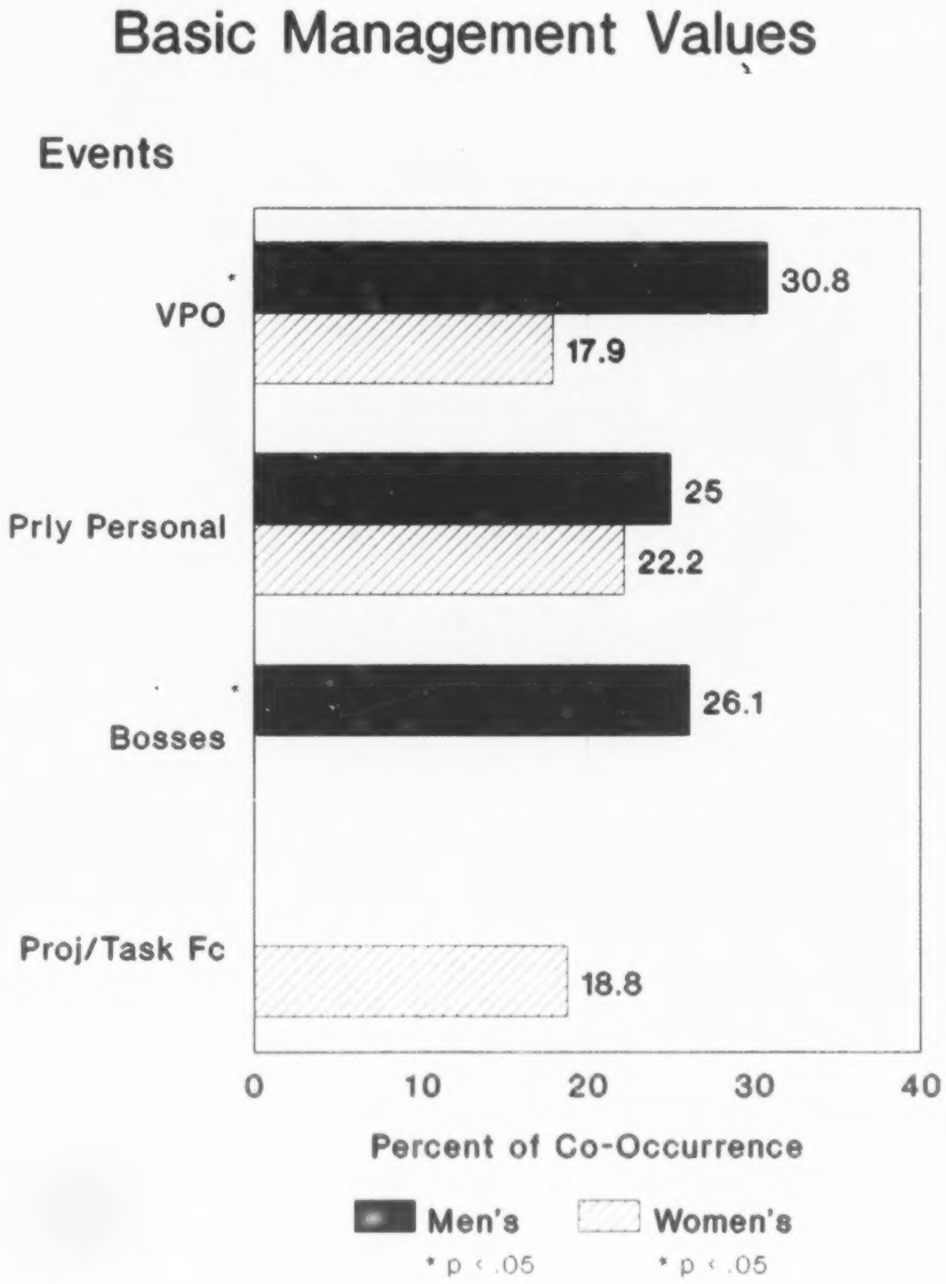
Bosses	Bosses
Business Mstks	Business mistakes
Career Stbck	Career setback
Changing Jobs	Changing jobs
Coursework	Coursework
Early Work	Early work experience
Emp Perf Pr	Employee performance problems
First Sup Job	First supervisory job
Line Staff	Line to staff switches
Prly Personal	Purely personal
Proj/Task Fc	Project/task force assignments
Prsnl Trauma	Personal trauma
Scope	Managing a larger scope
Scratch	Starting from scratch
Trng Bus Arnd	Turning a business around
VPO	Values playing out

All About The Business One Is In



The Balance Between Work And Personal Life




Basic Management Values
Events
VPO *
Prly Personal
Bosses *
Proj/Task Fc
30.8
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22.2
26.1
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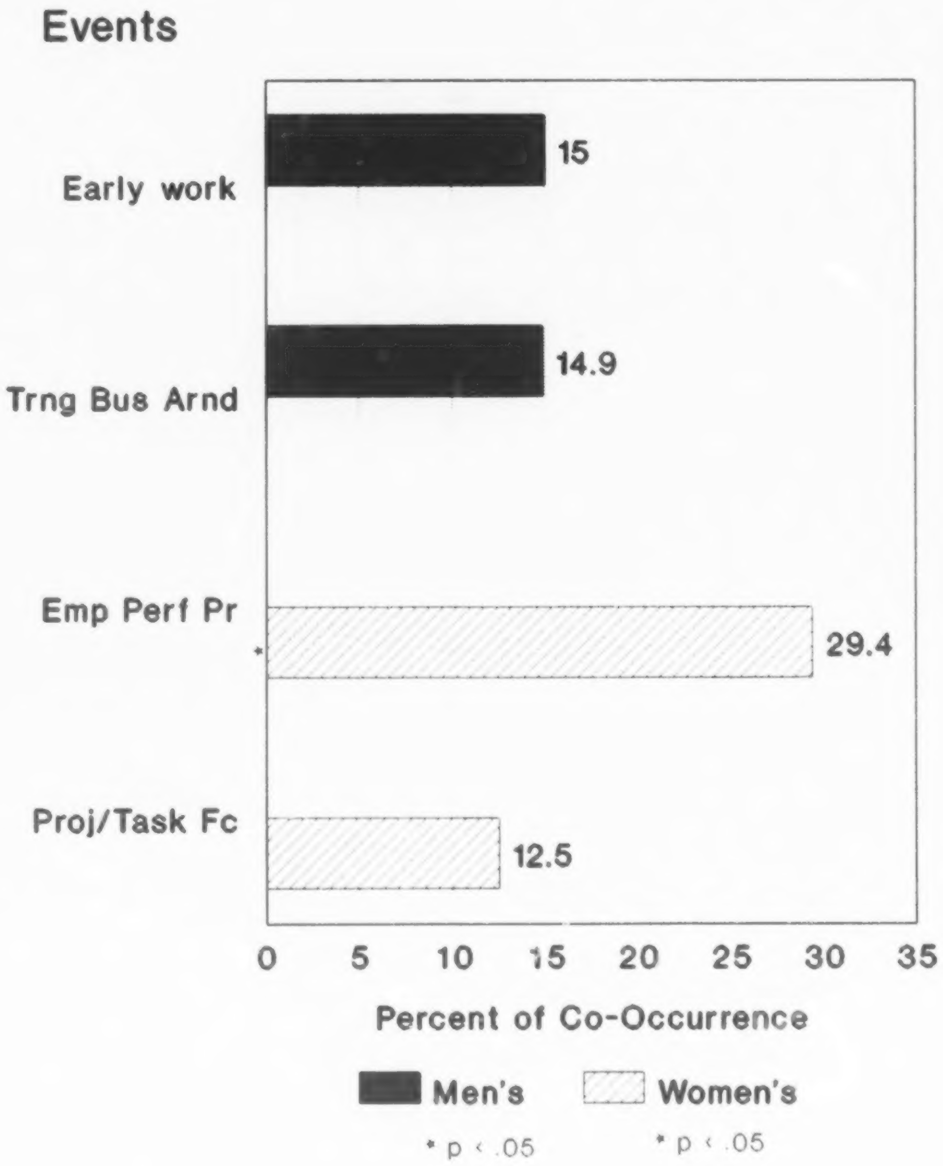
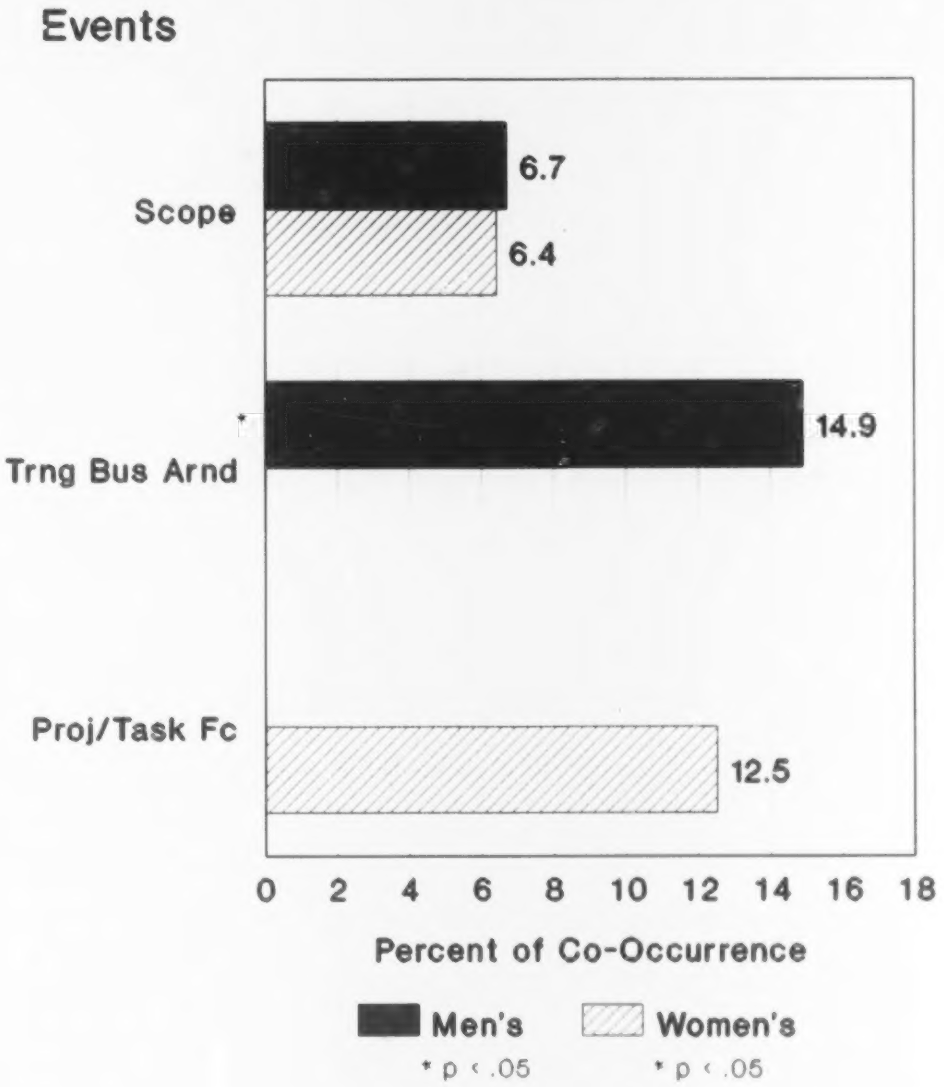
40
Percent of Co-Occurrence
Men's
* p < .05
Women's
* p < .05

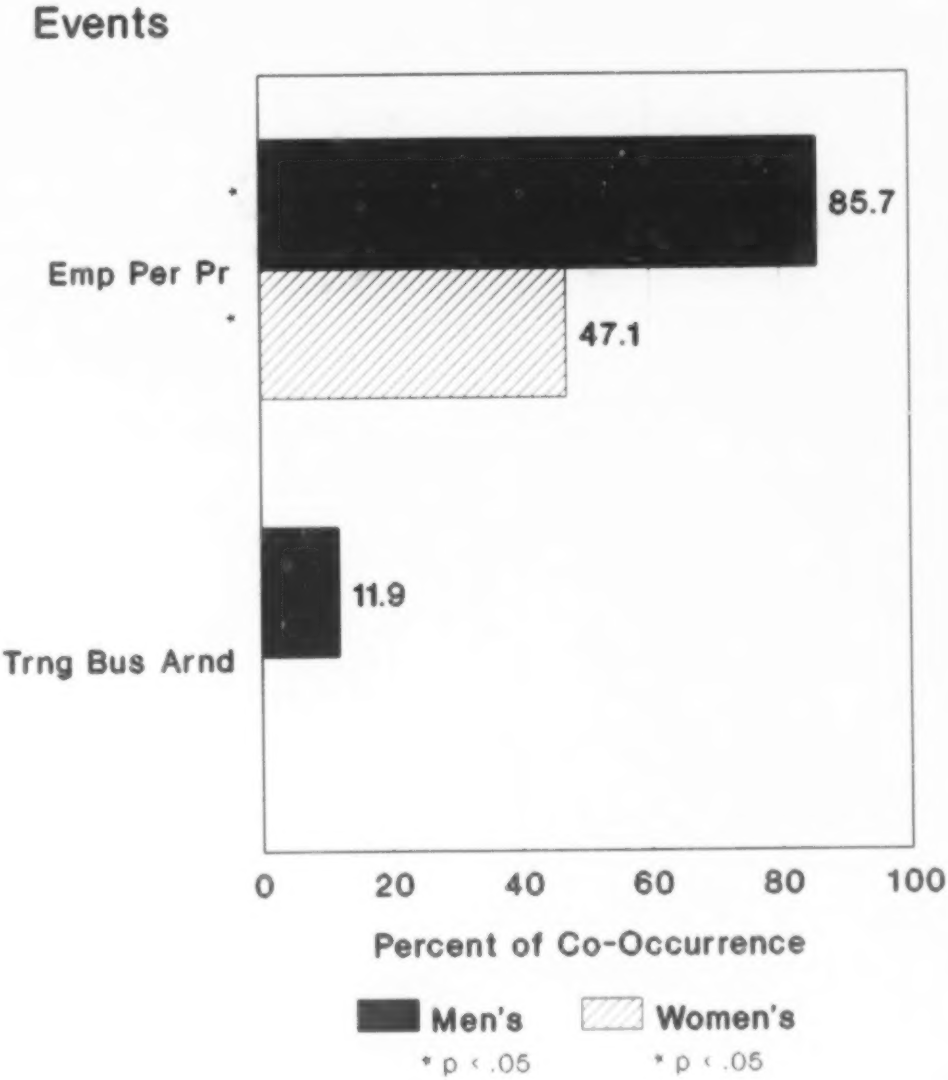
Being Tough When Necessary



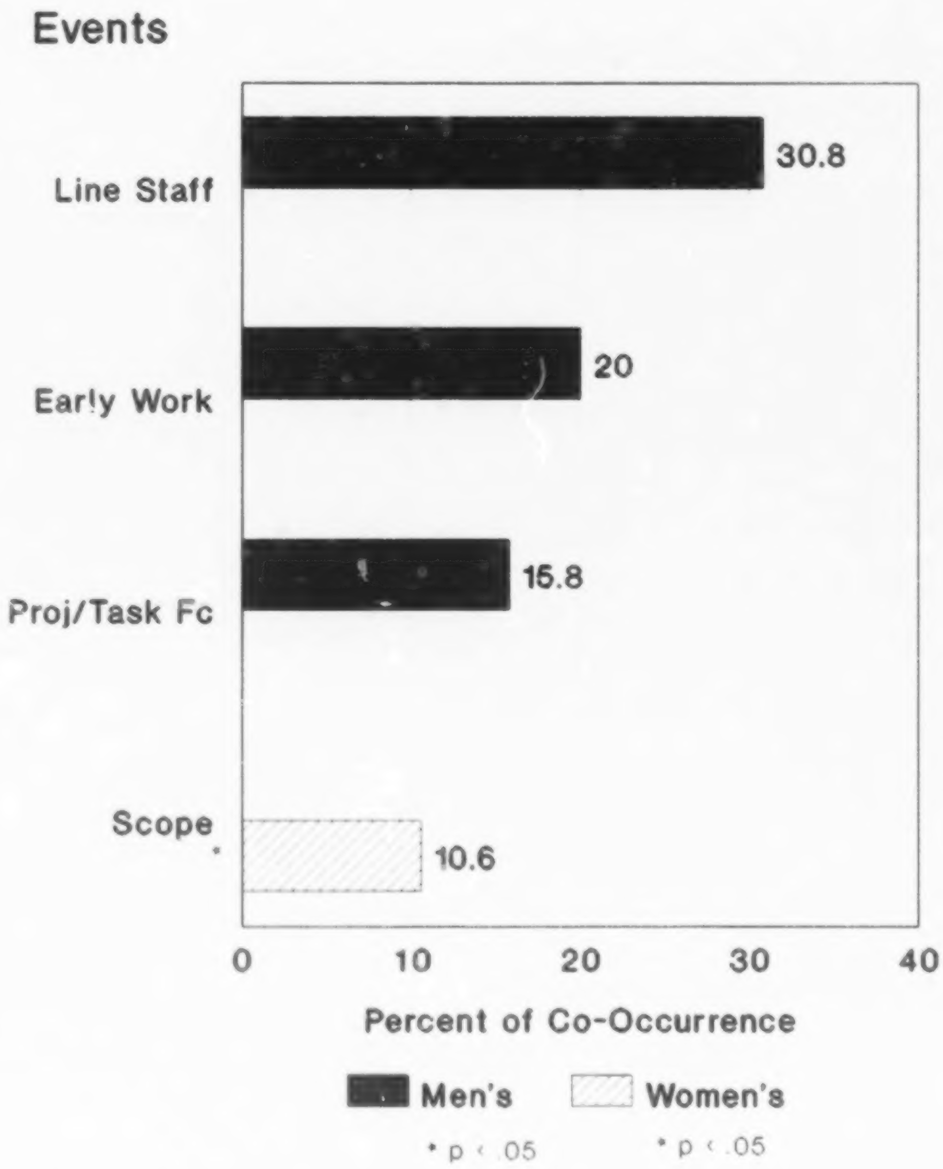
Building And Using Structure And Control Systems



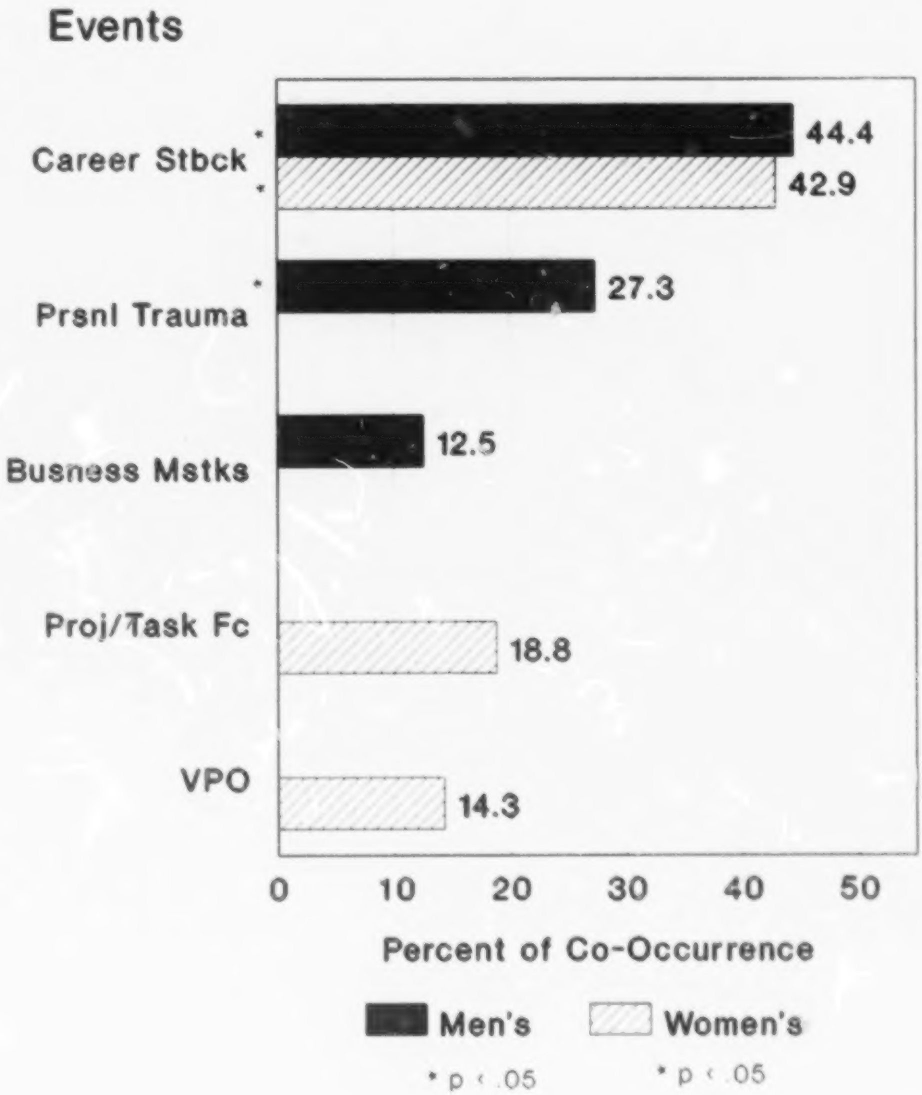
Confronting Employee Performance Problems

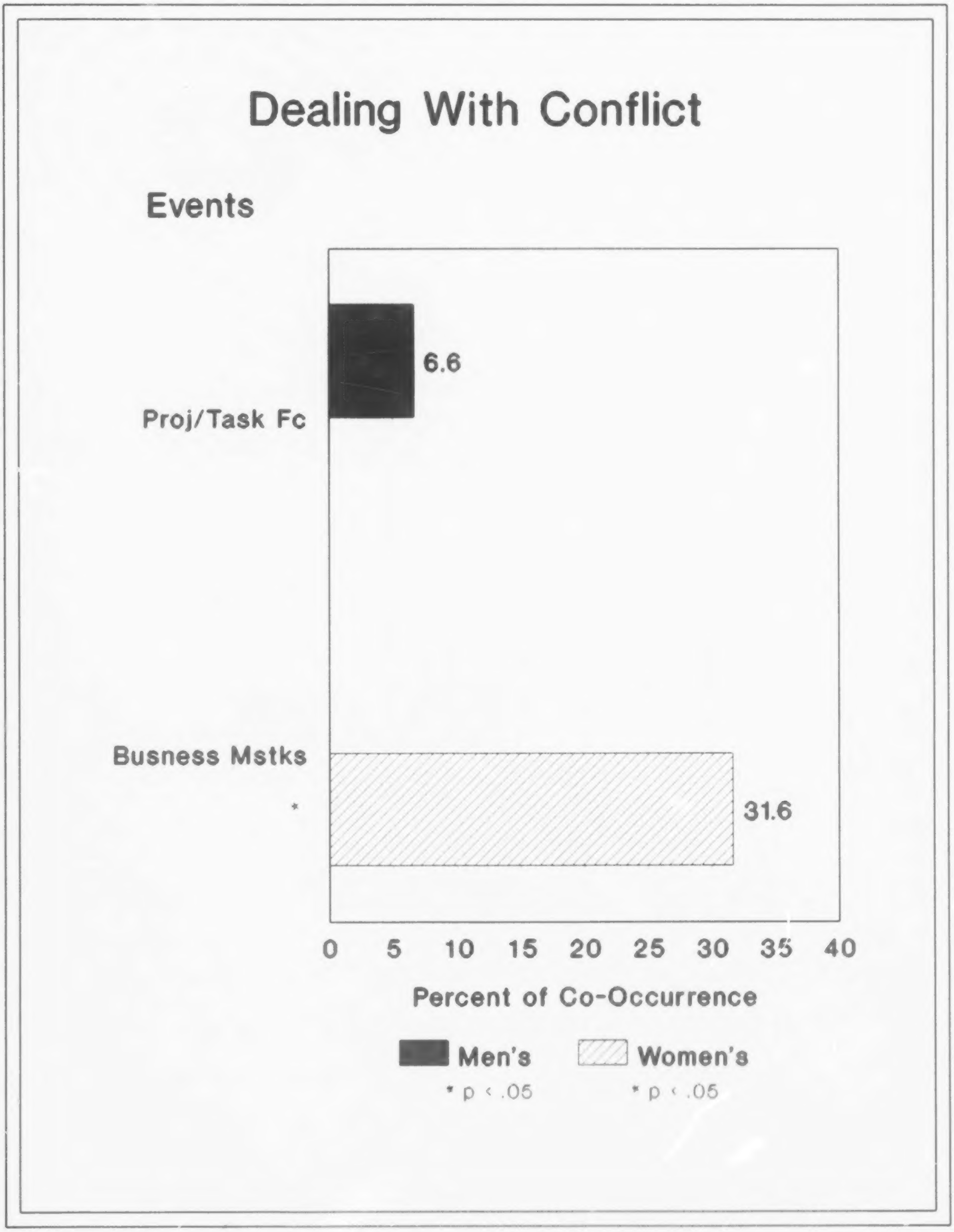


Coping With Ambiguous Situations



Coping With Situations Beyond Your Control




Dealing With Conflict
Events
Proj/Task Fc
6.6
Busness Mstks
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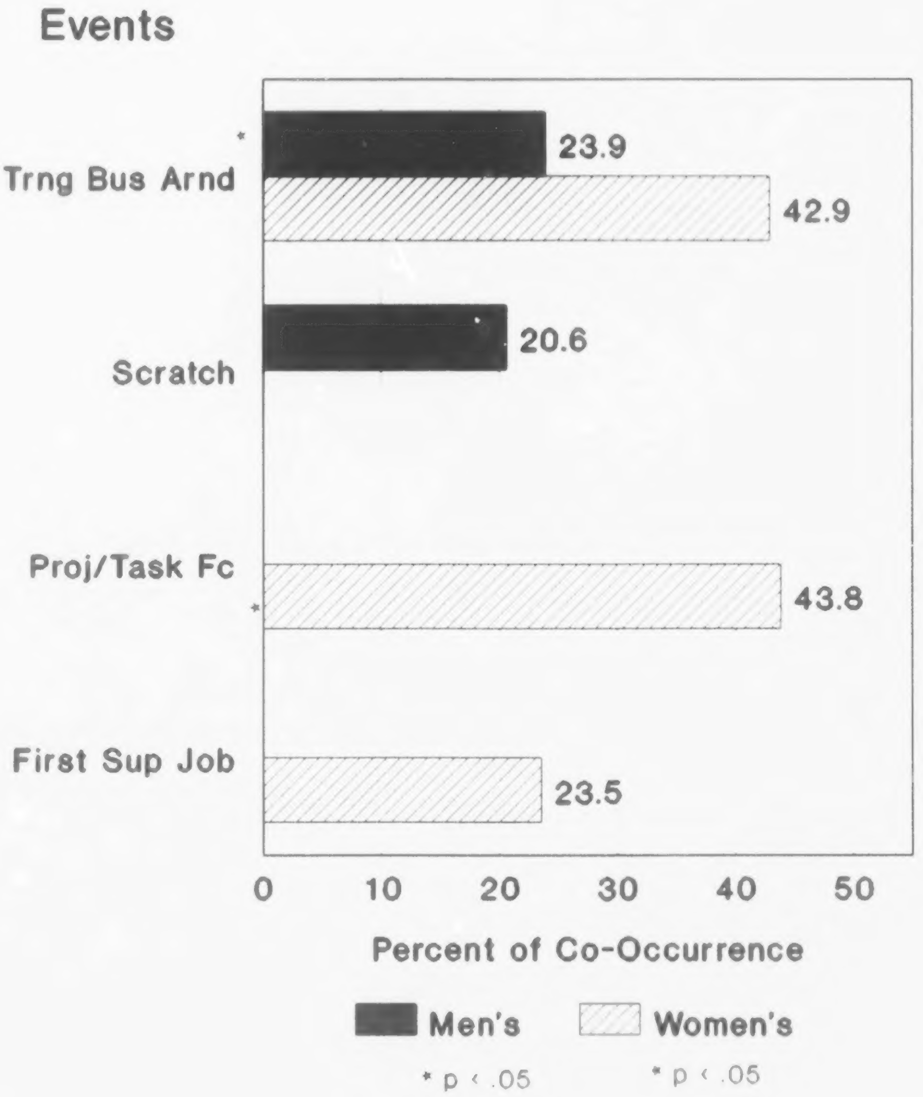
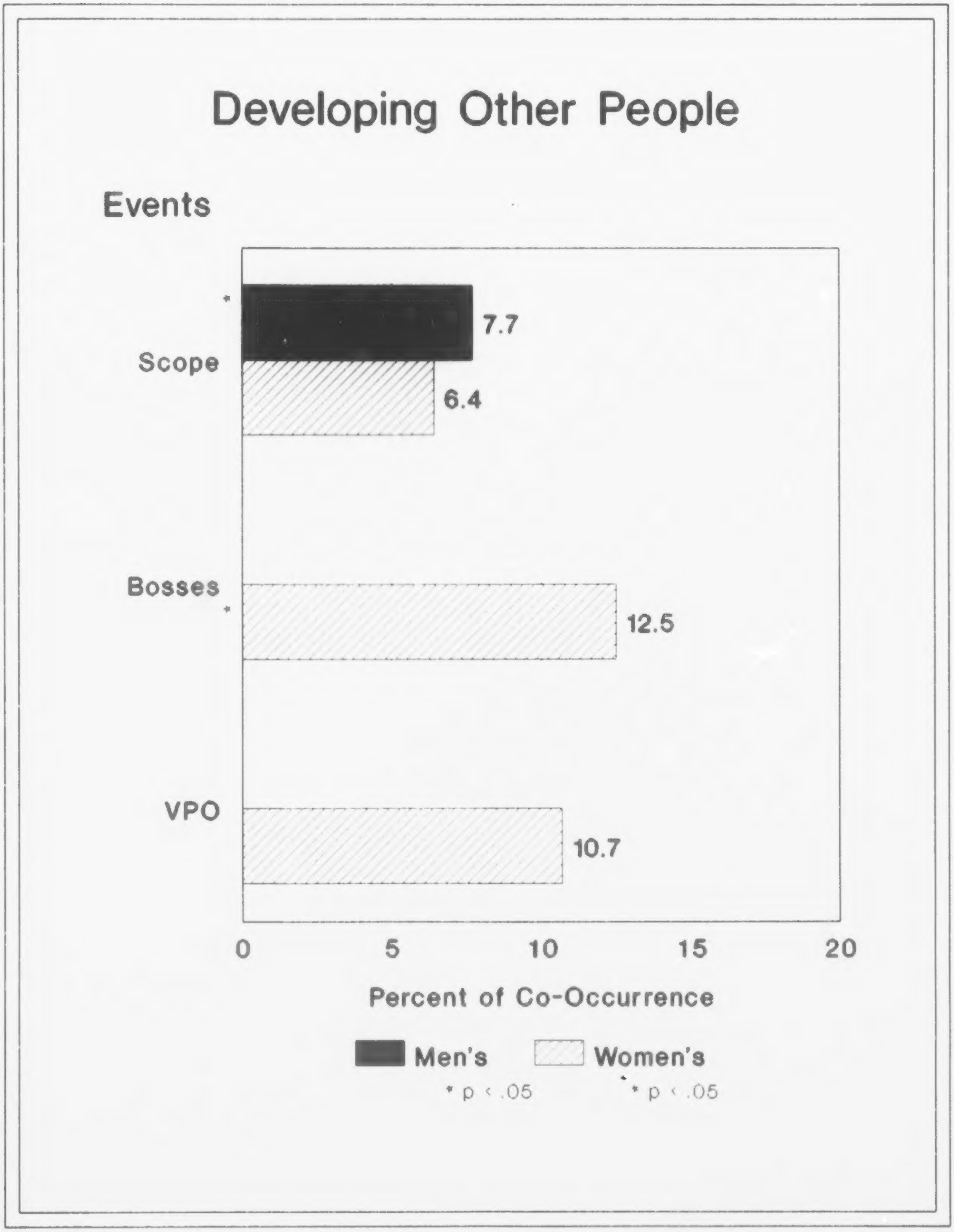
Percent of Co-Occurrence
Men's
Women's
* p < .05
* p < .05

Dealing With People Over Whom You Have No Authority




Developing Other People
Events
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Scope
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Bosses
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12.5
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5
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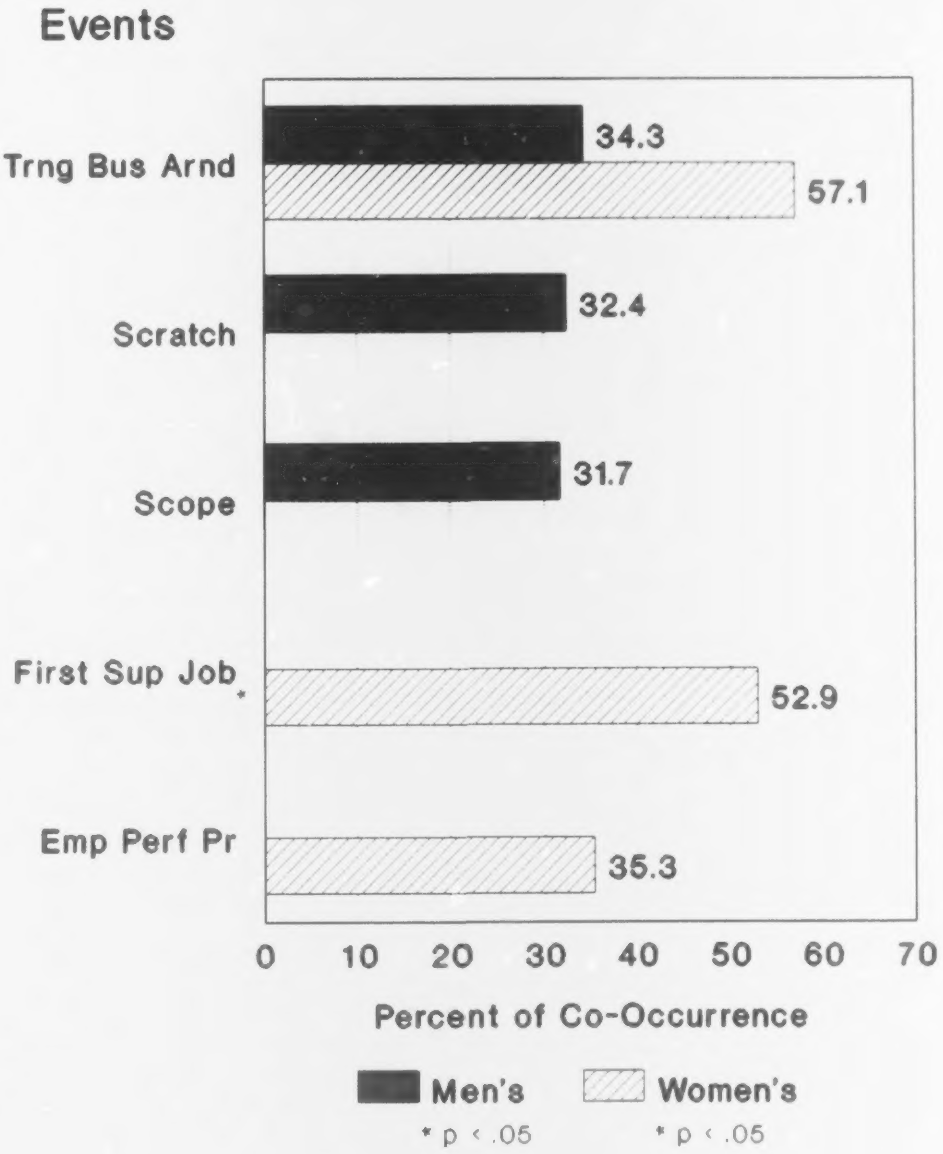
20
Percent of Co-Occurrence
Men's
Women's
* p < .05
* p < .05

Directing and Motivating Employees



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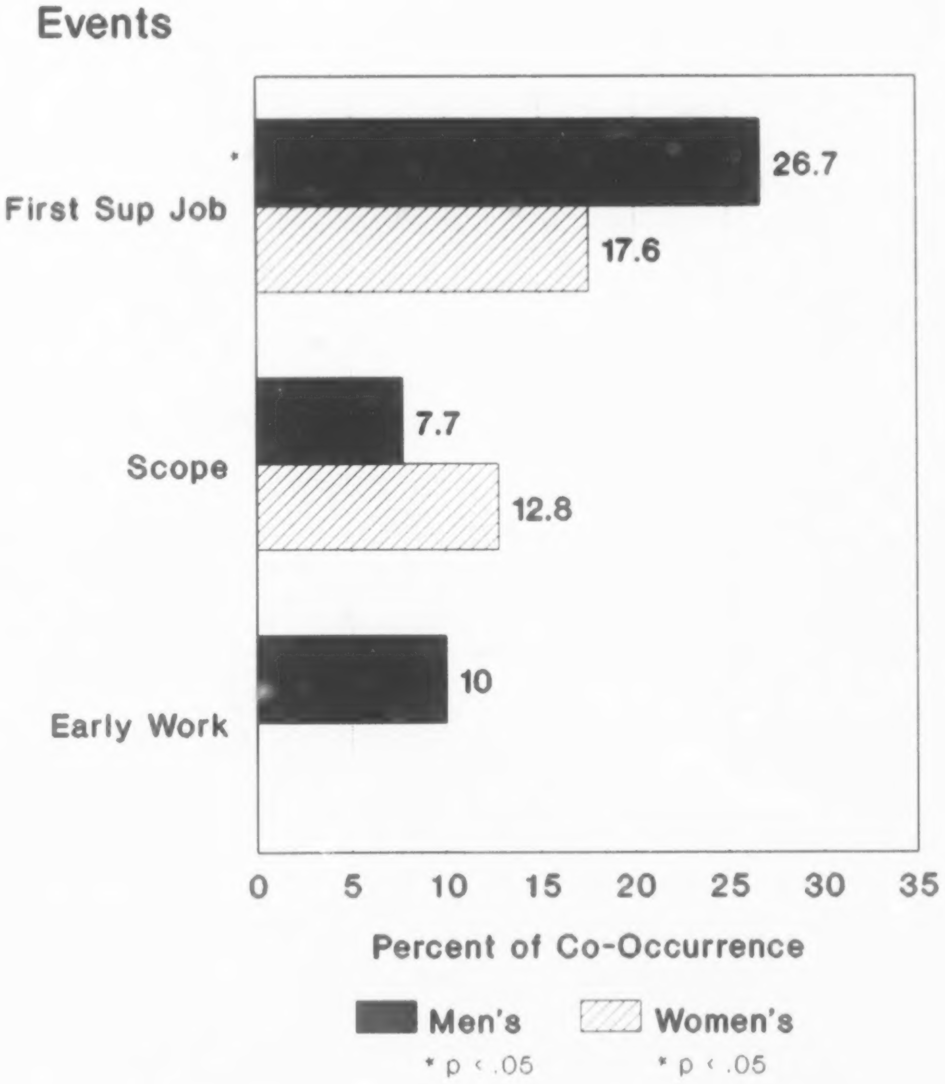

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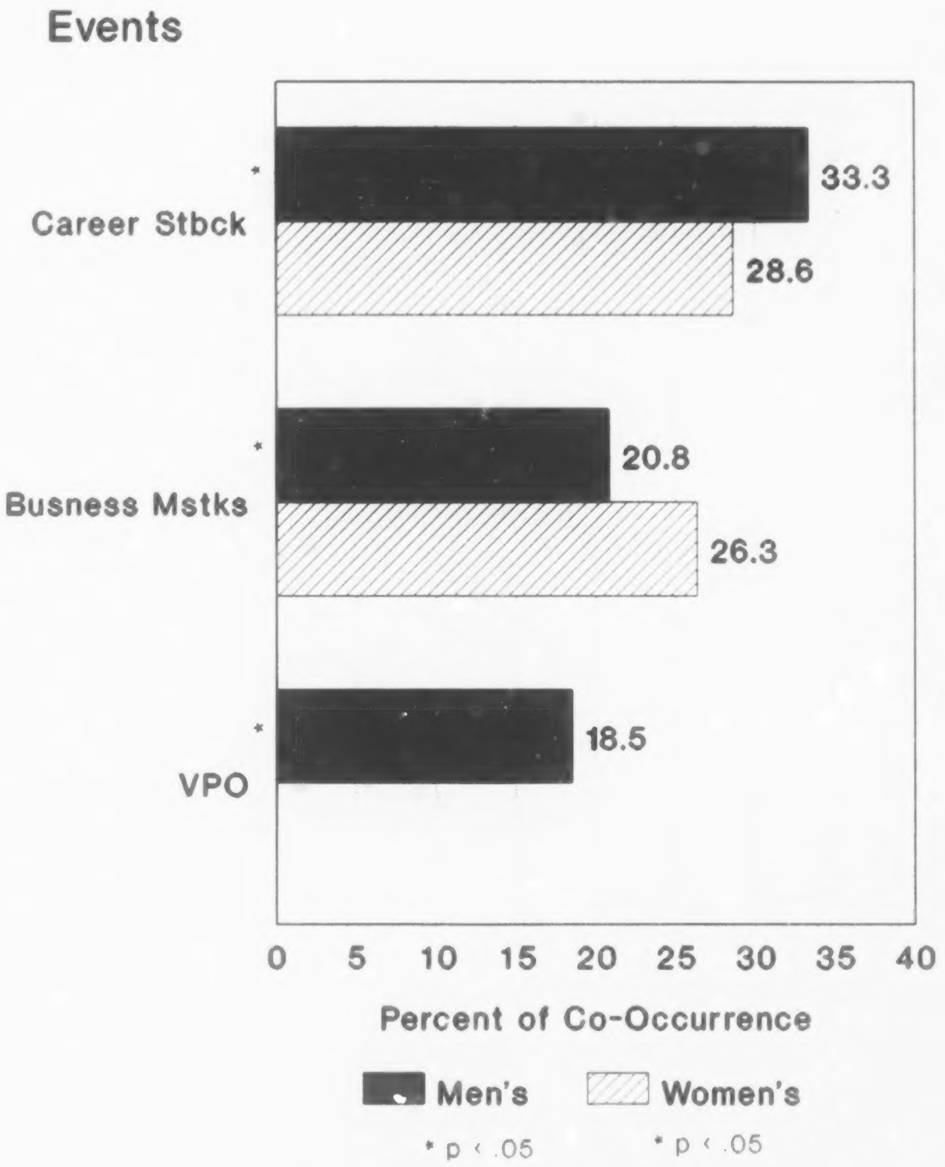

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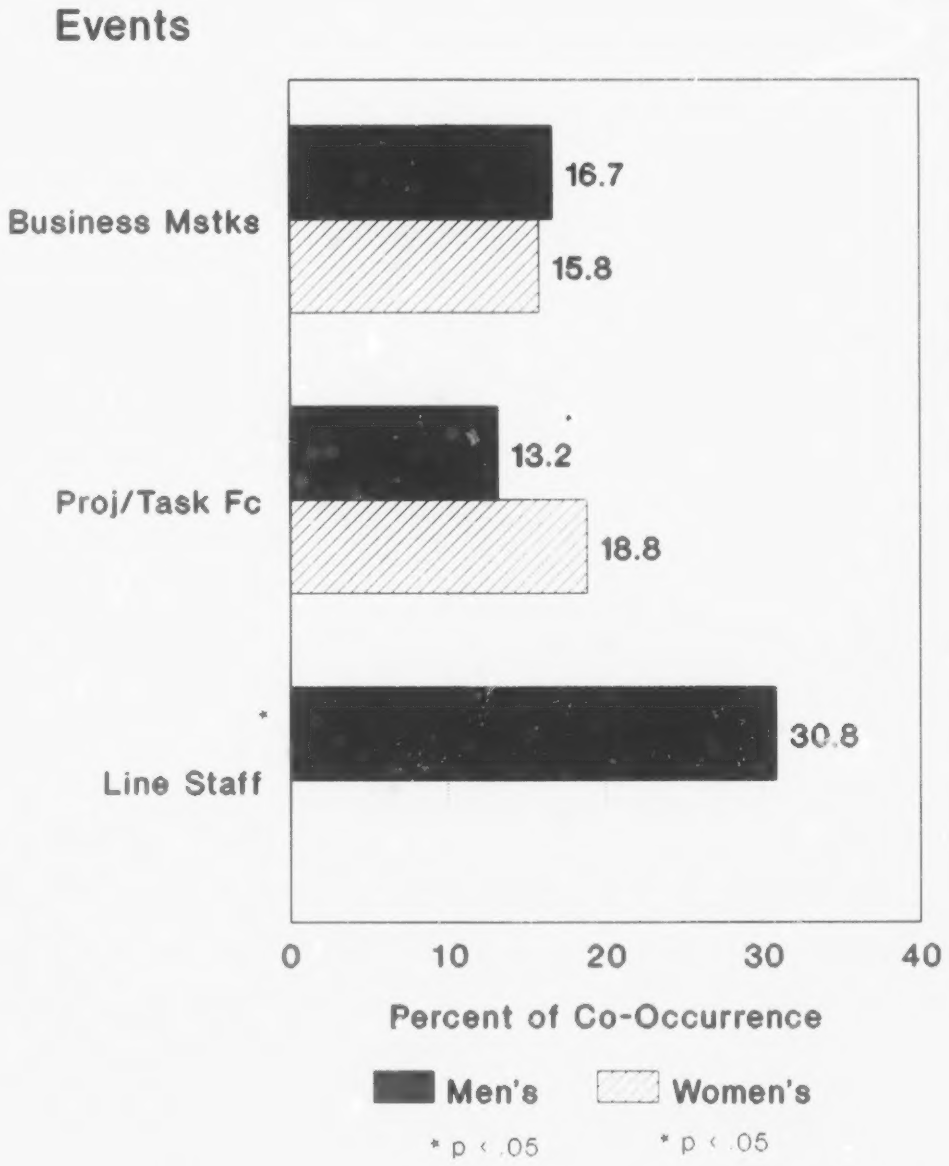

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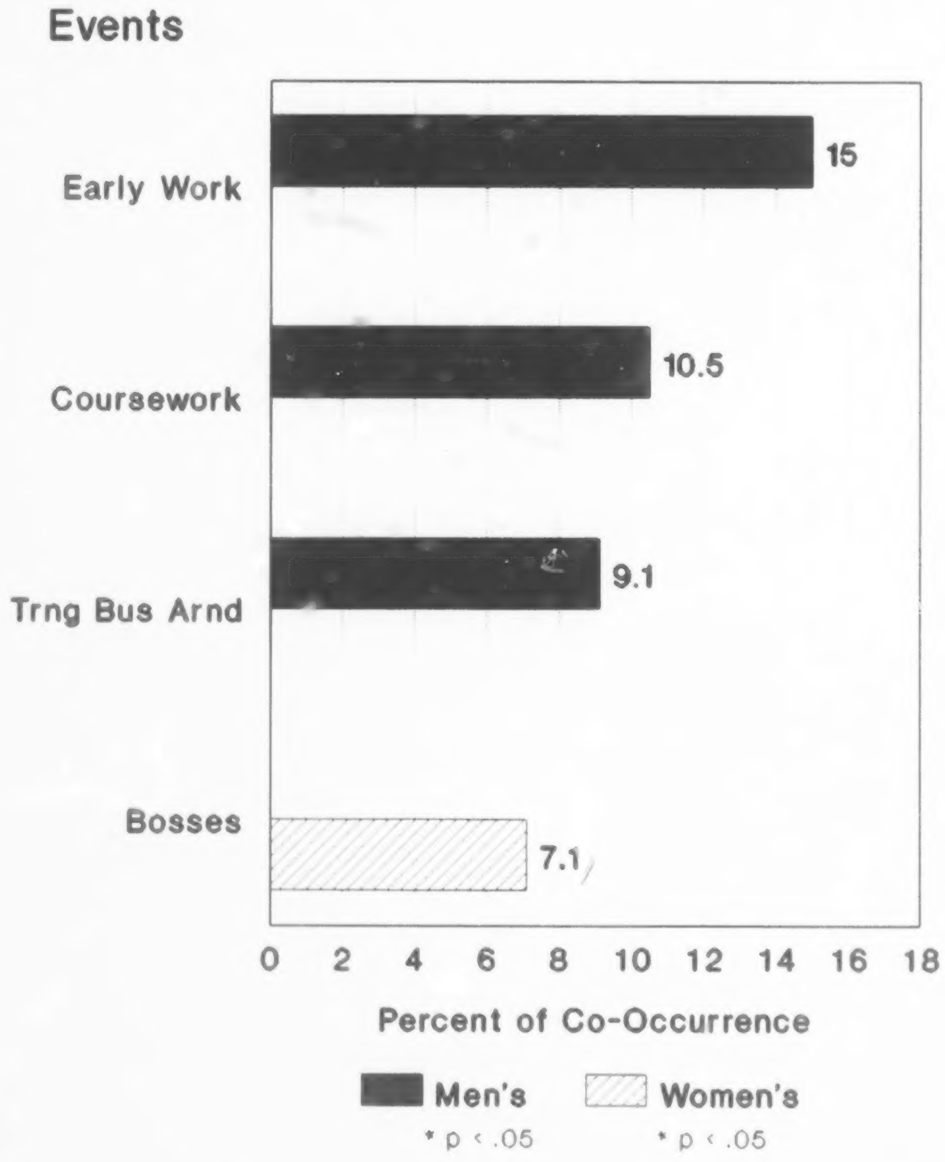
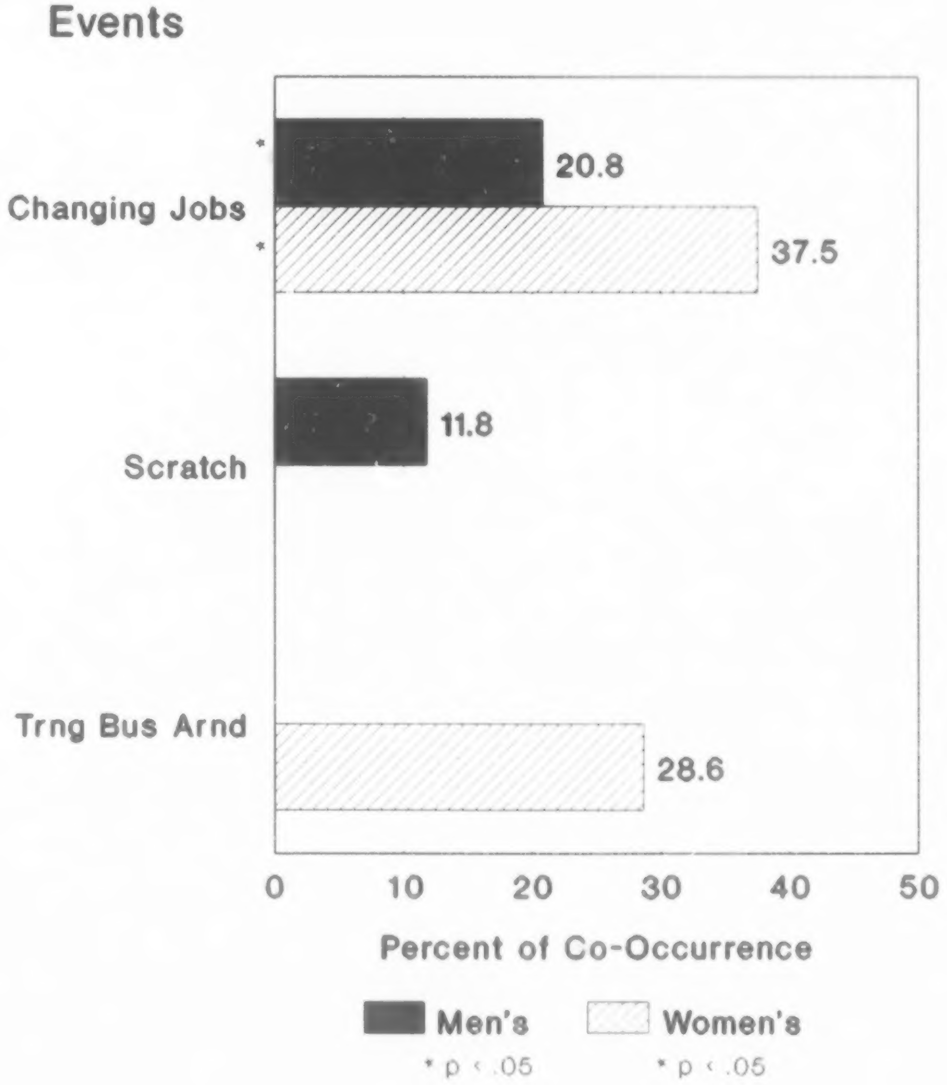


Knowing What Really Excites You About Work



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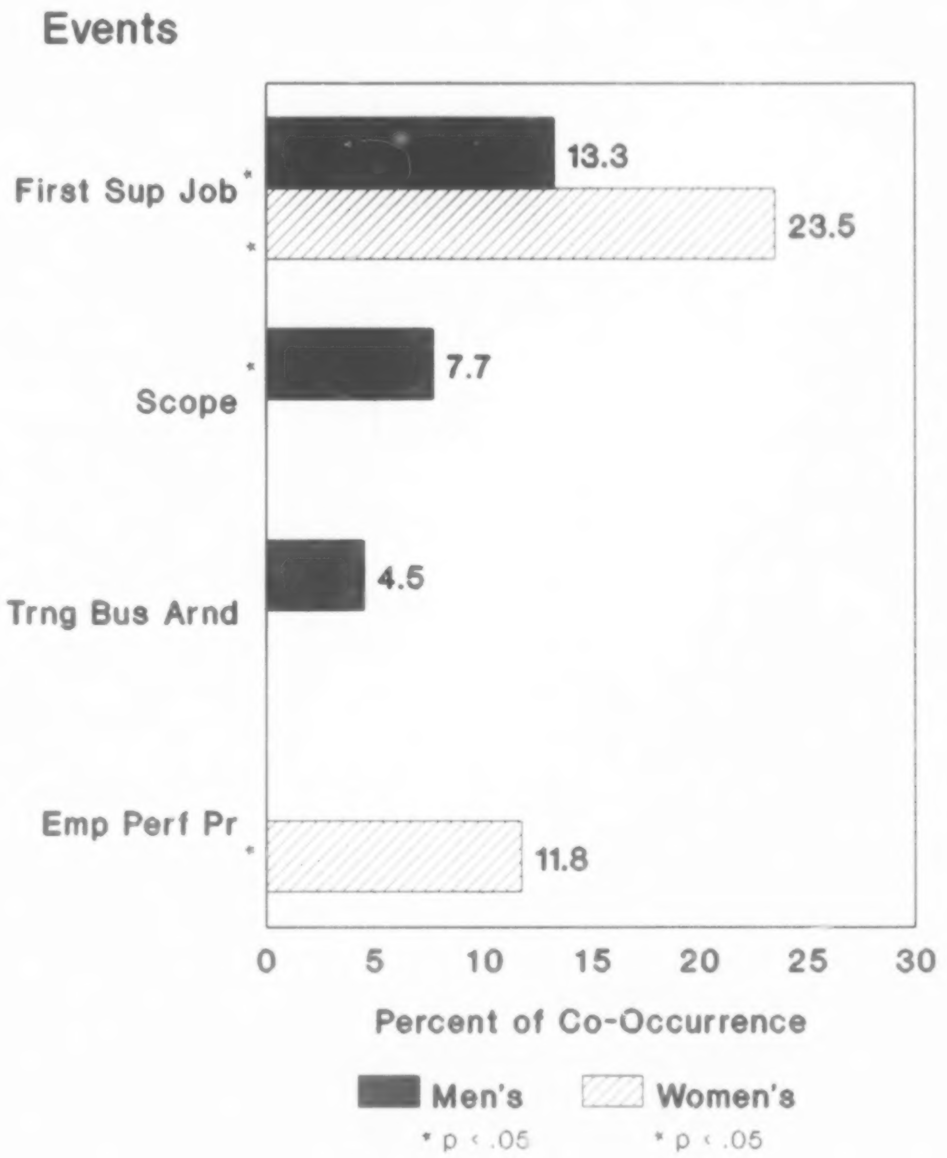

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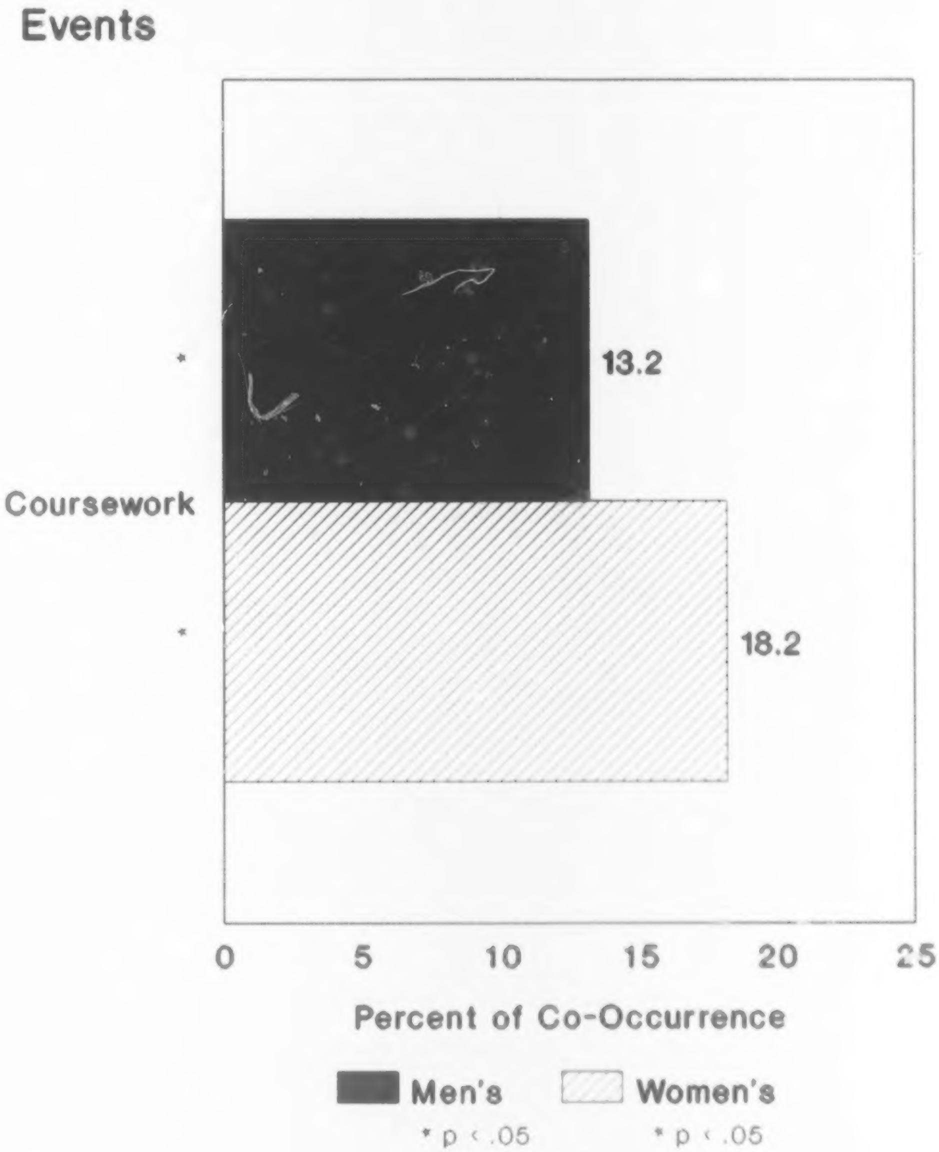

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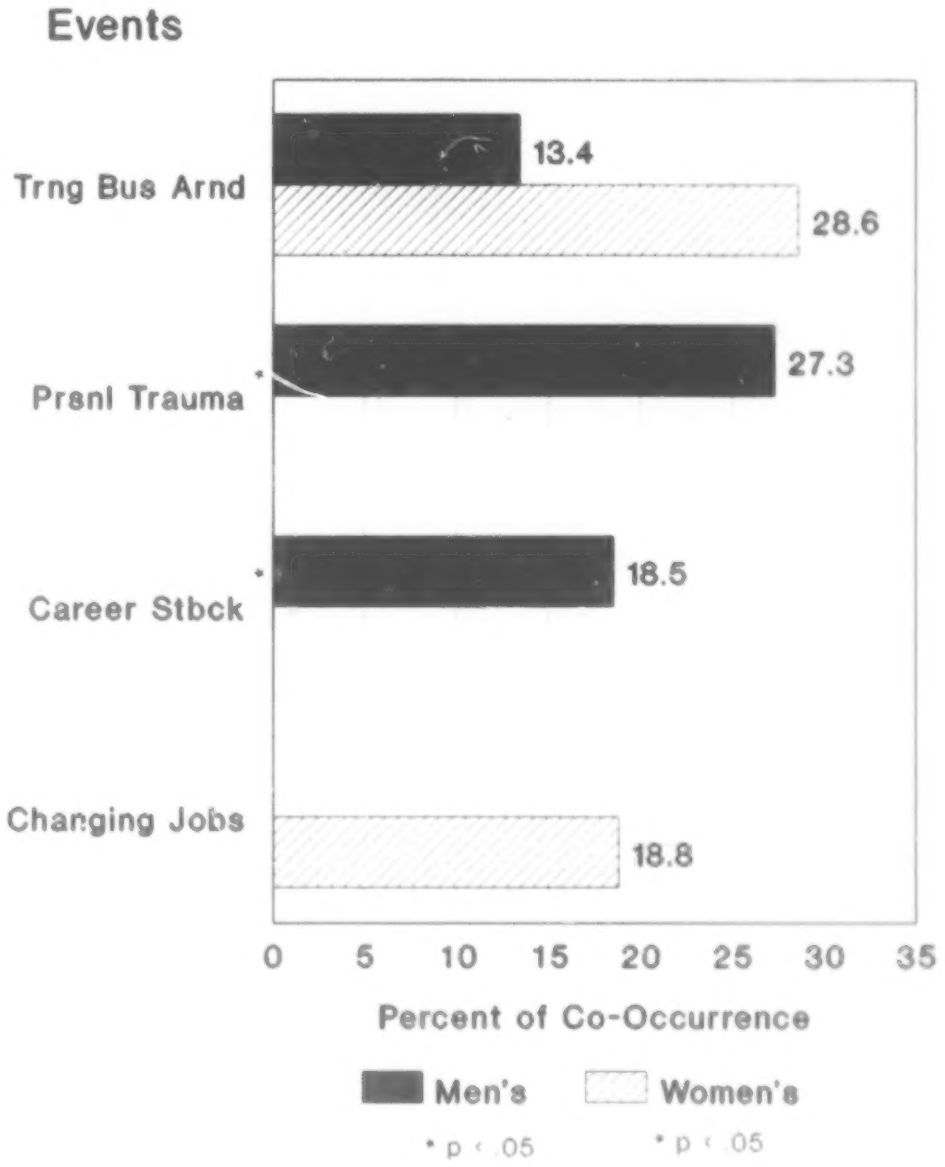

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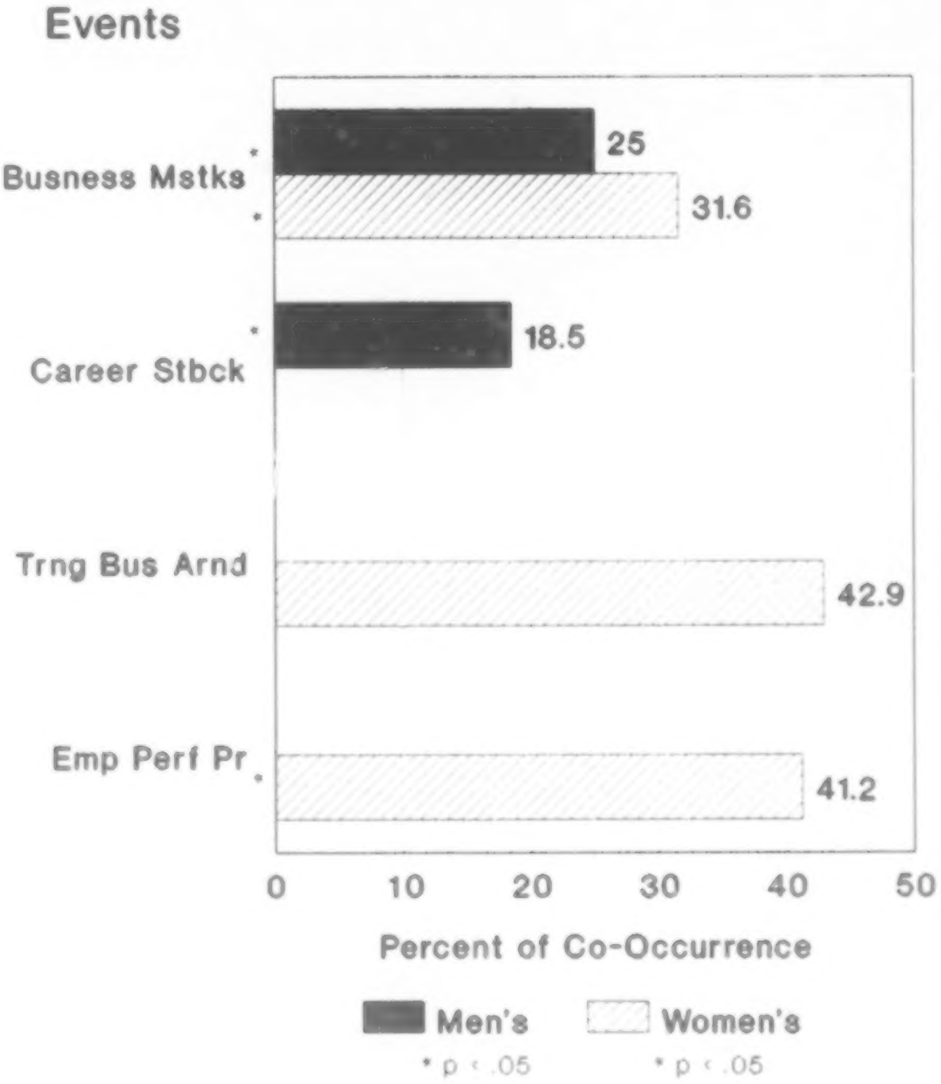
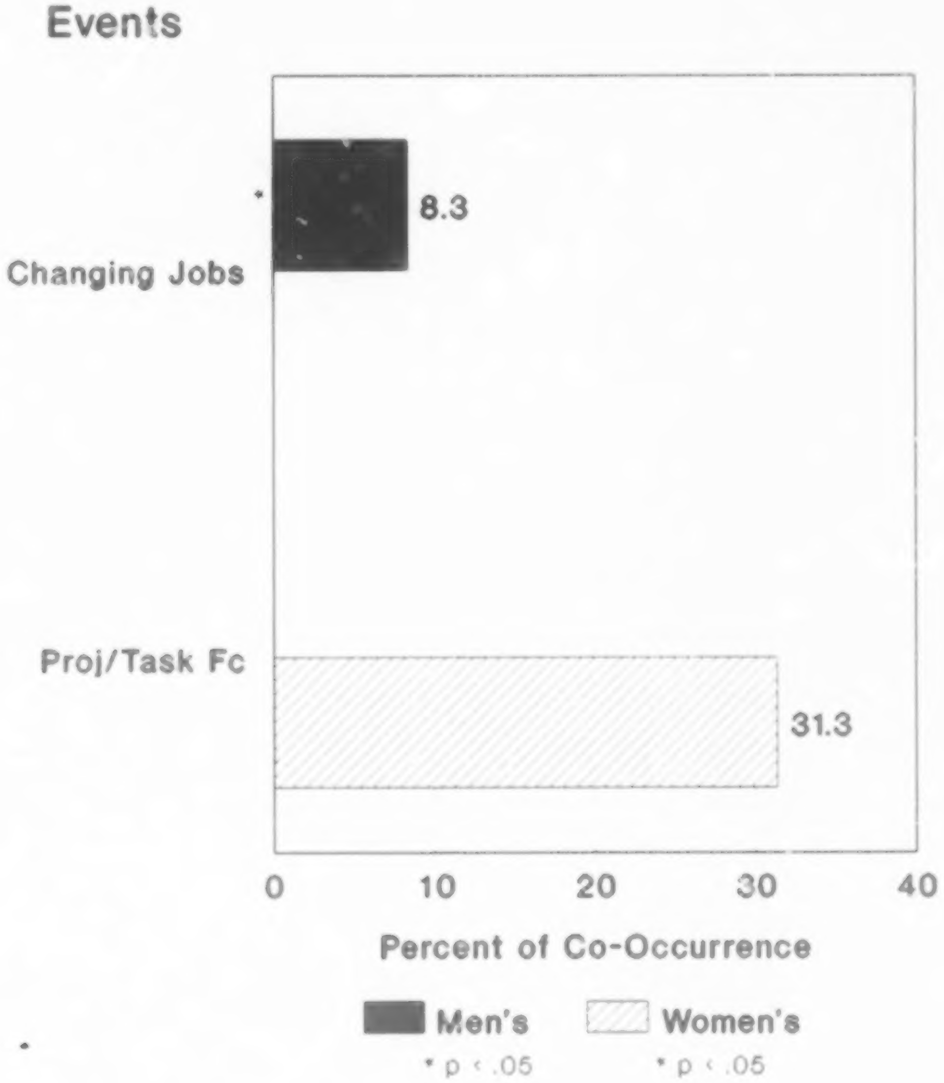


Recognizing And Seizing Opportunities



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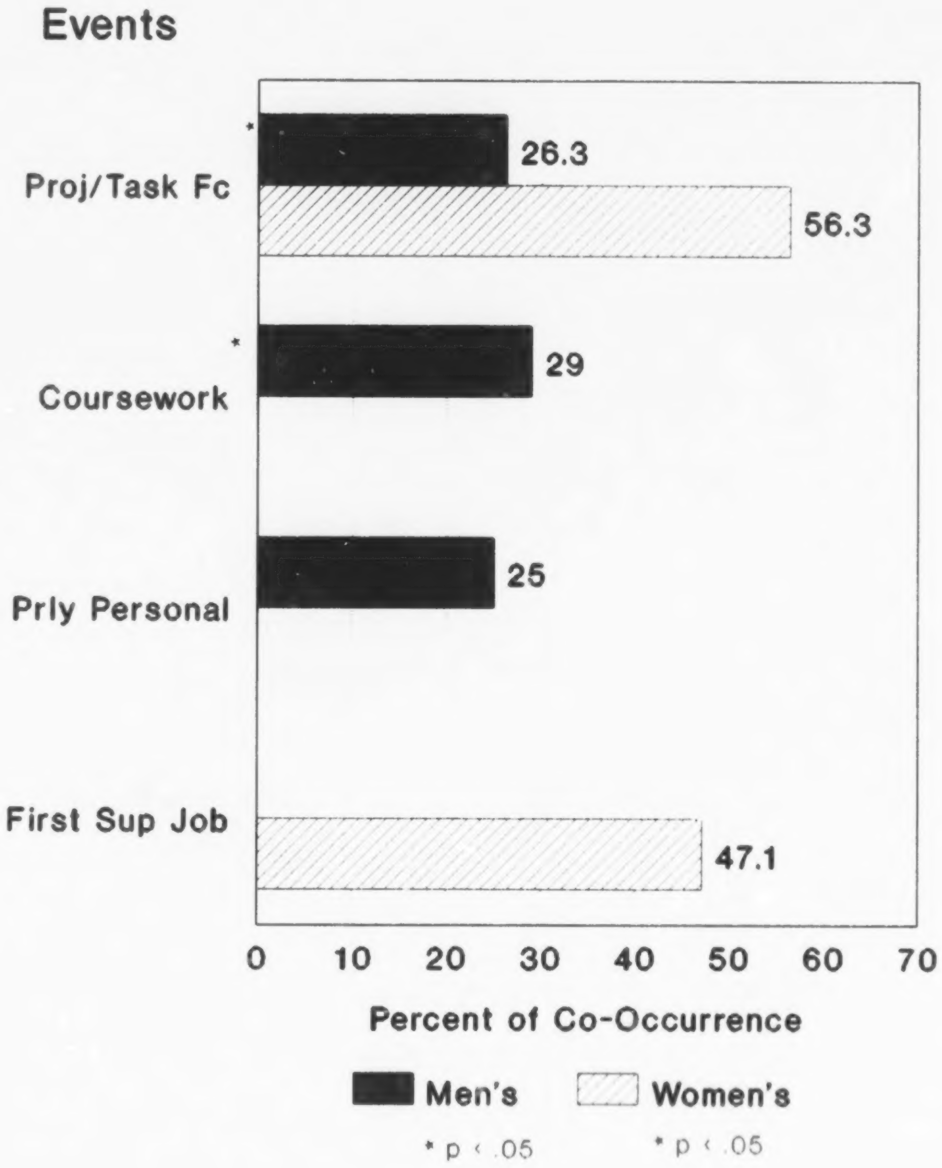

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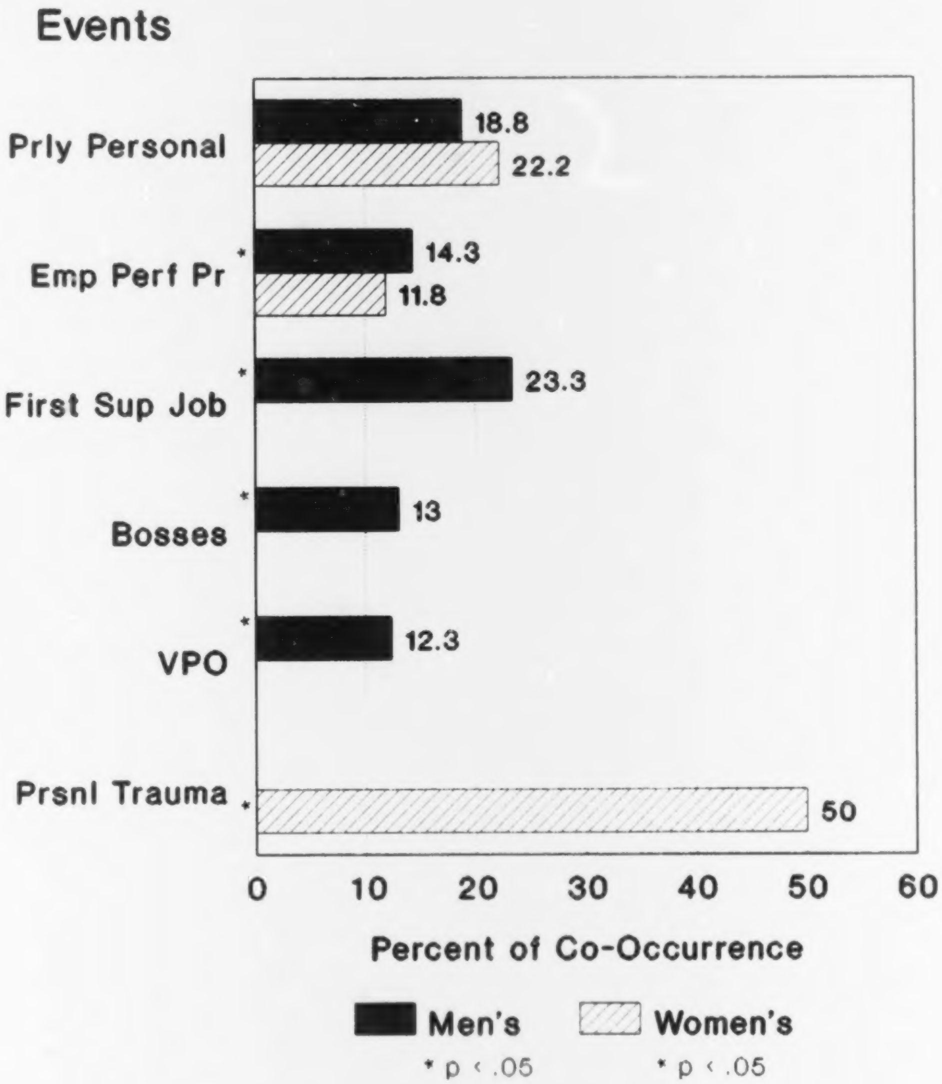
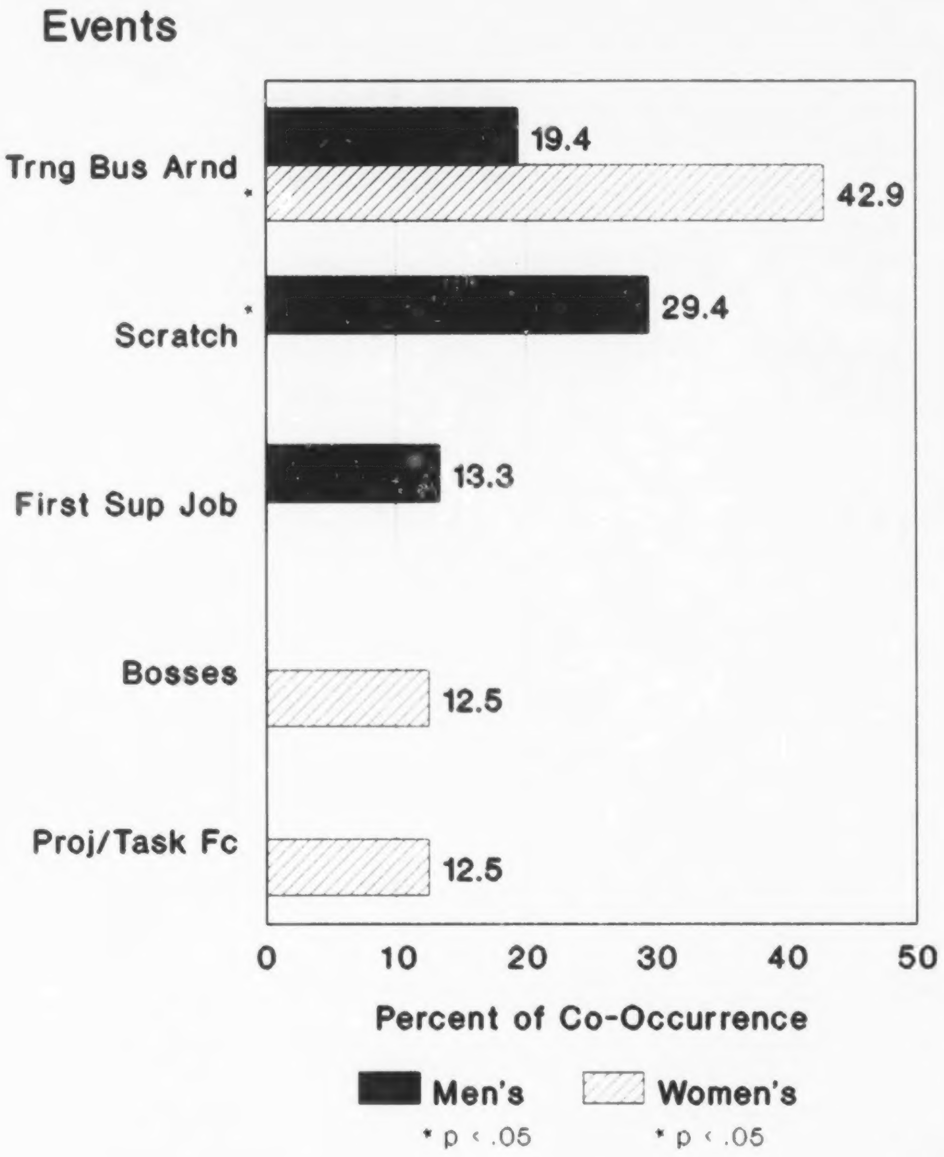


Shouldering Full Responsibility



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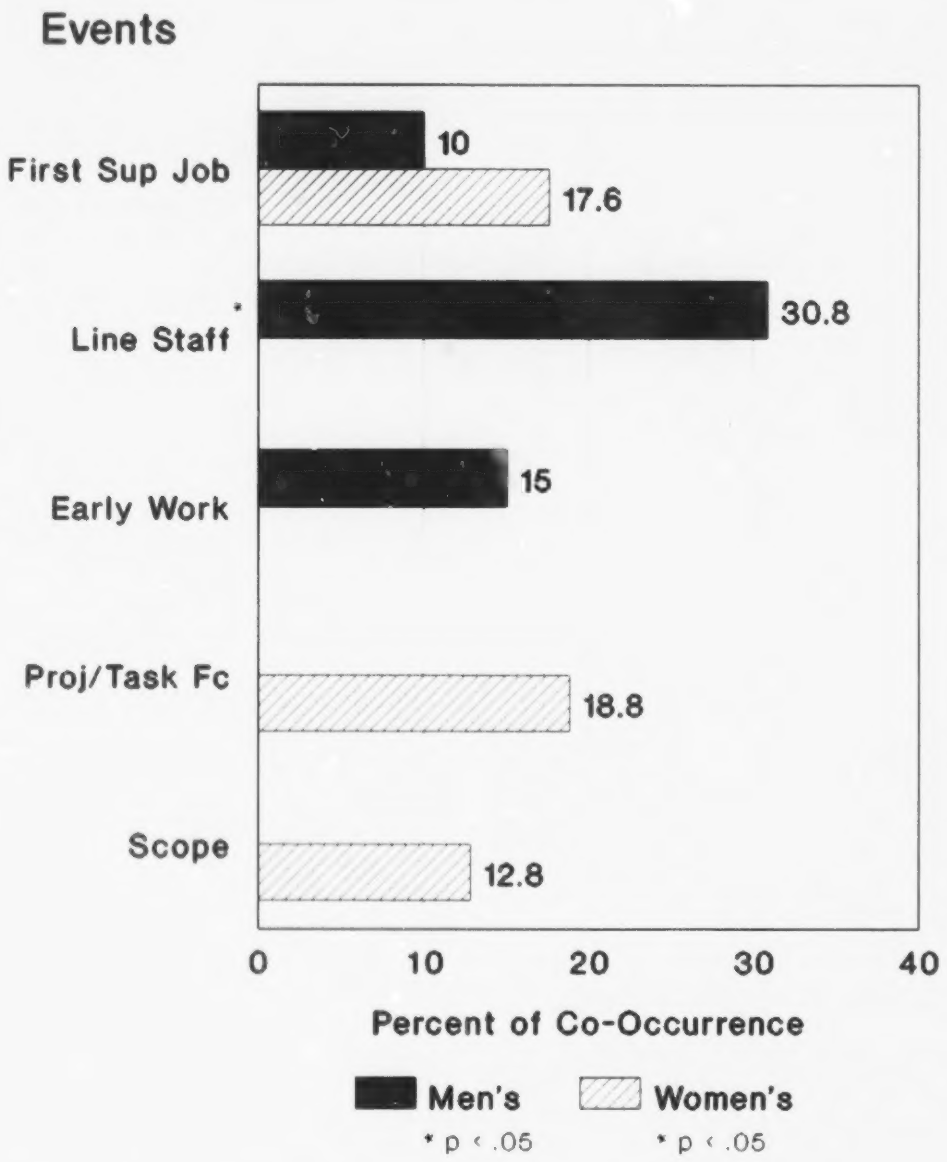

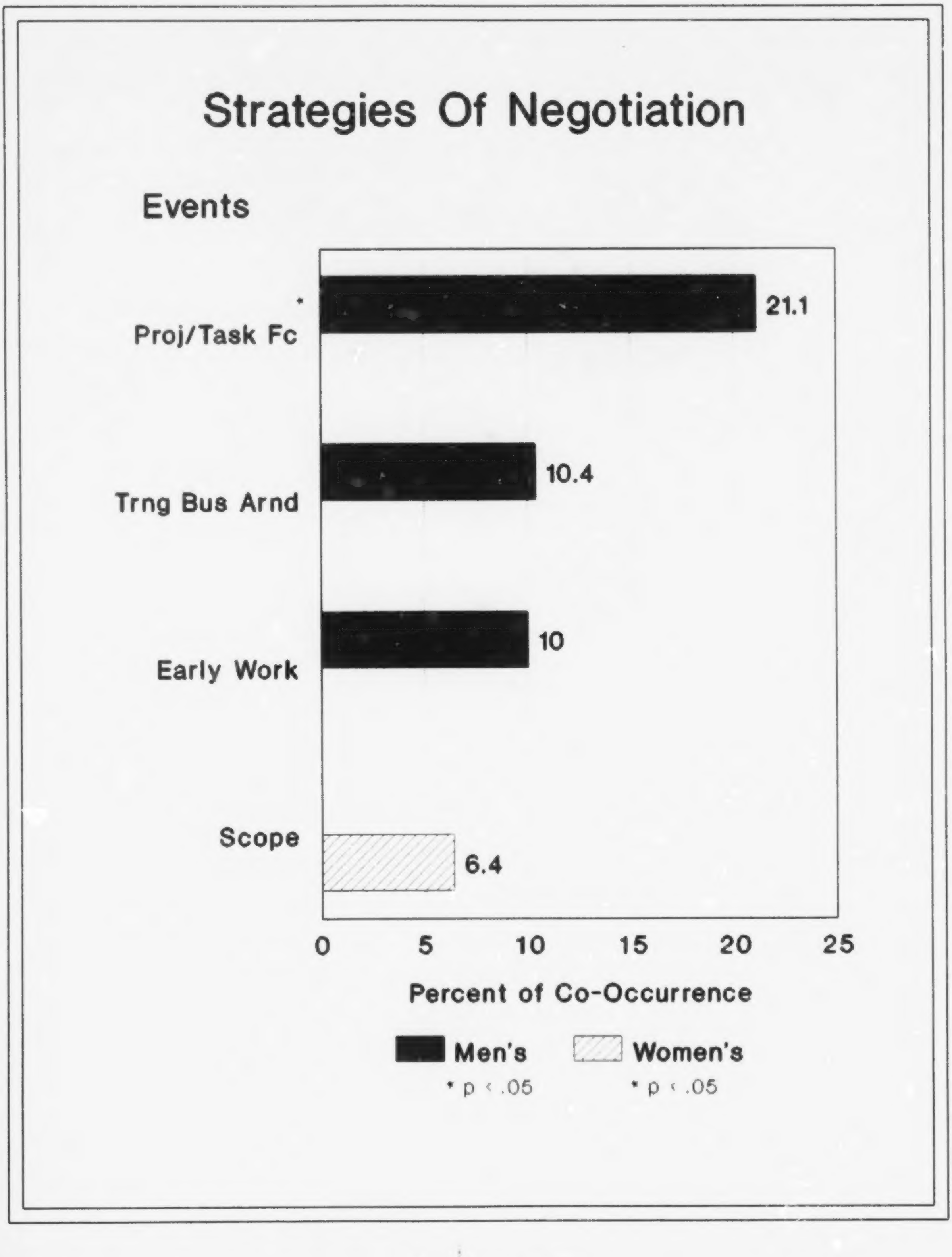
Strategies Of Negotiation
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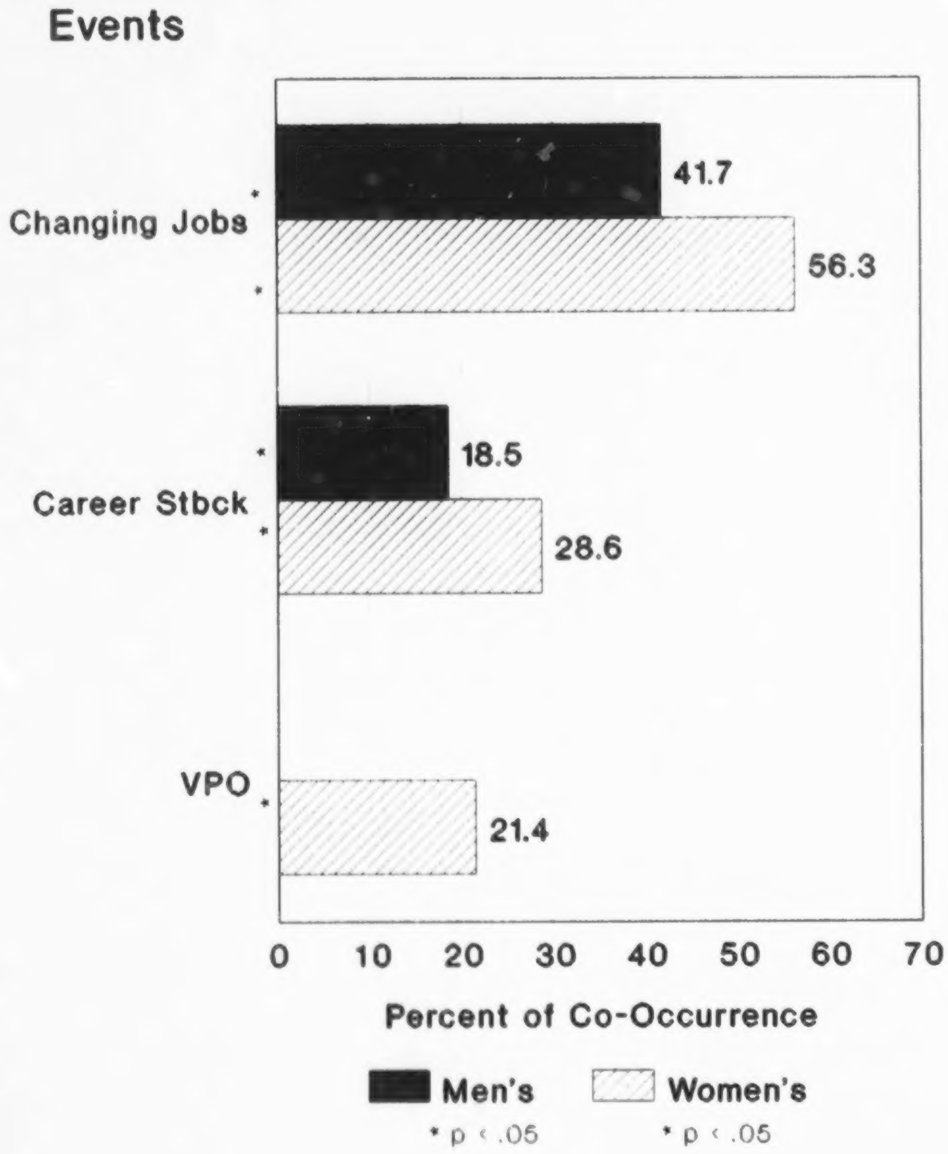
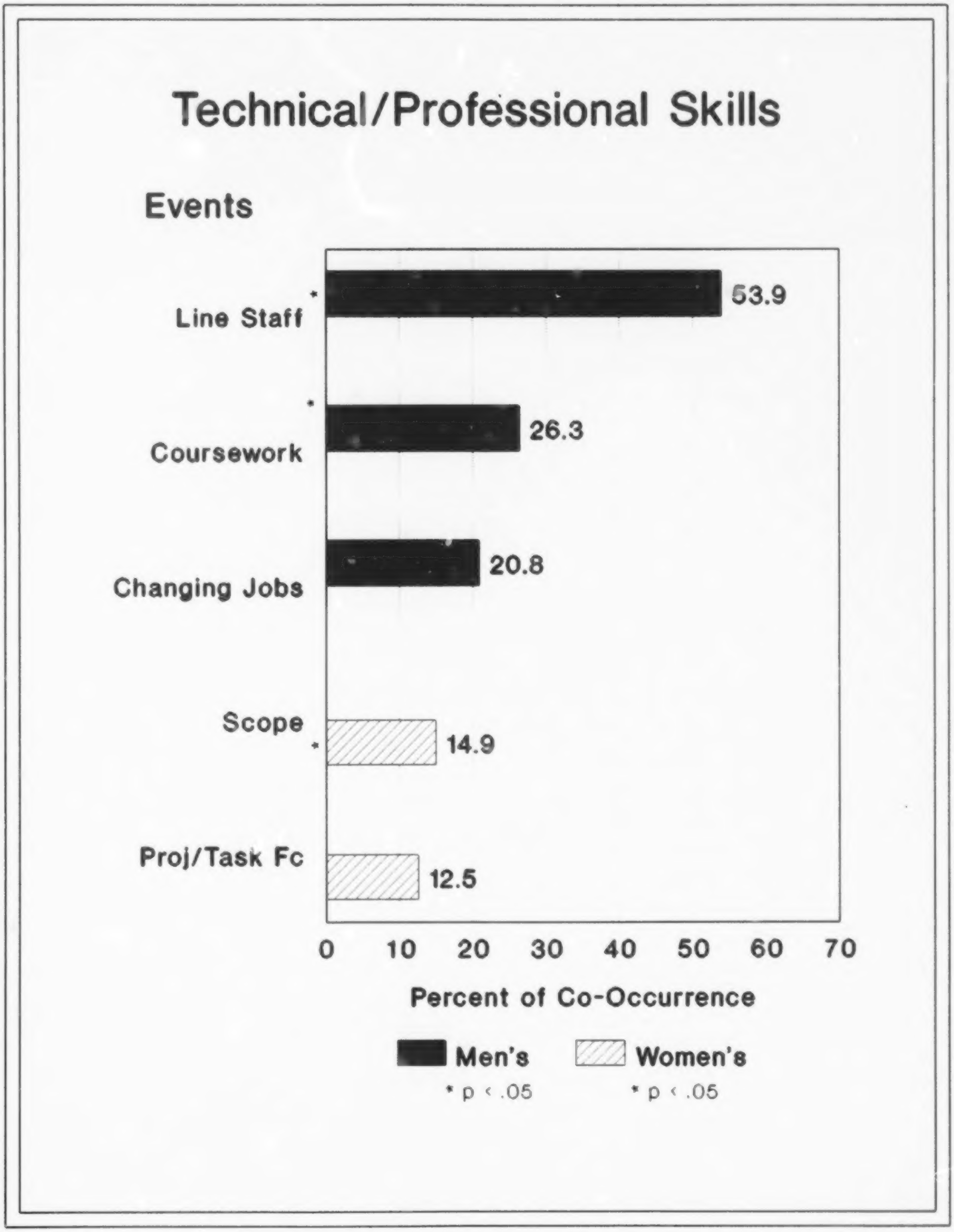
Taking Charge Of Your Career

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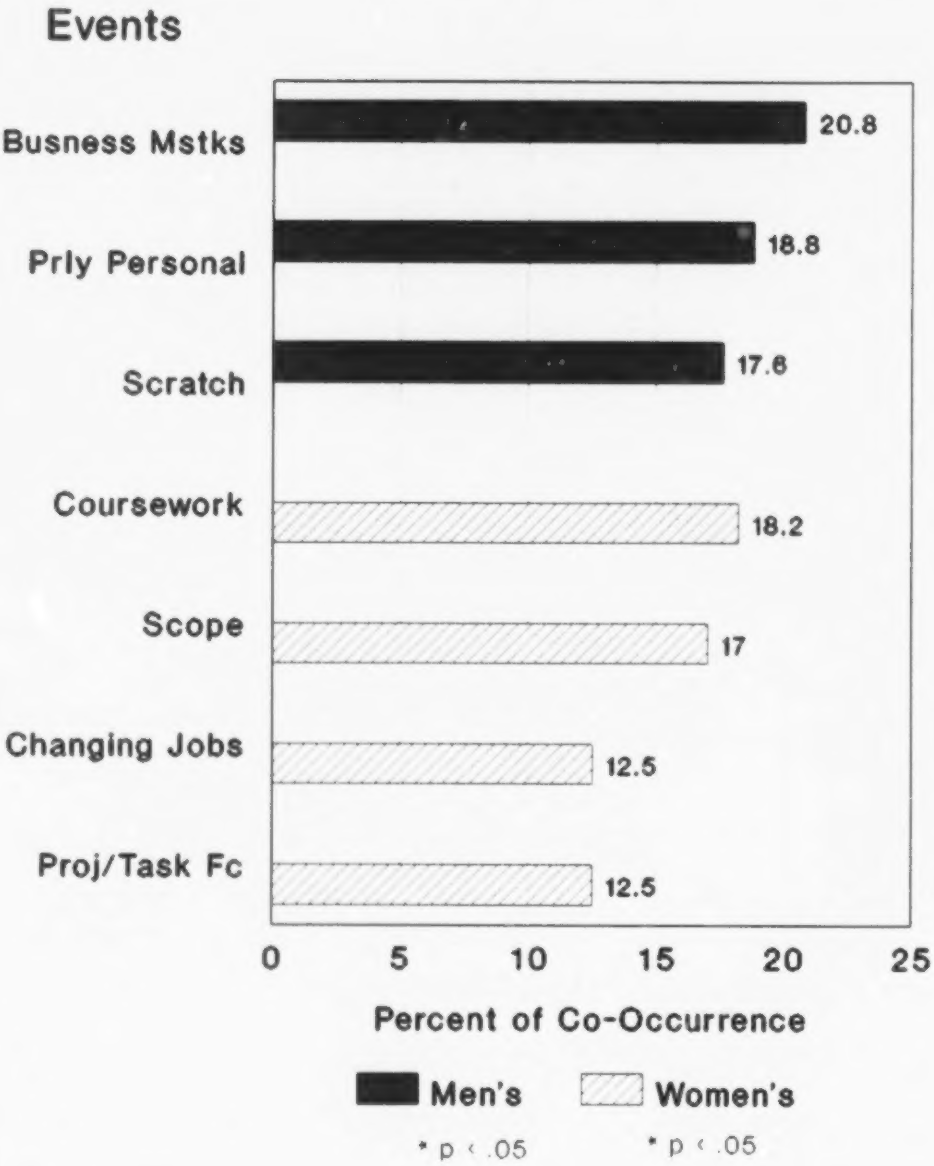
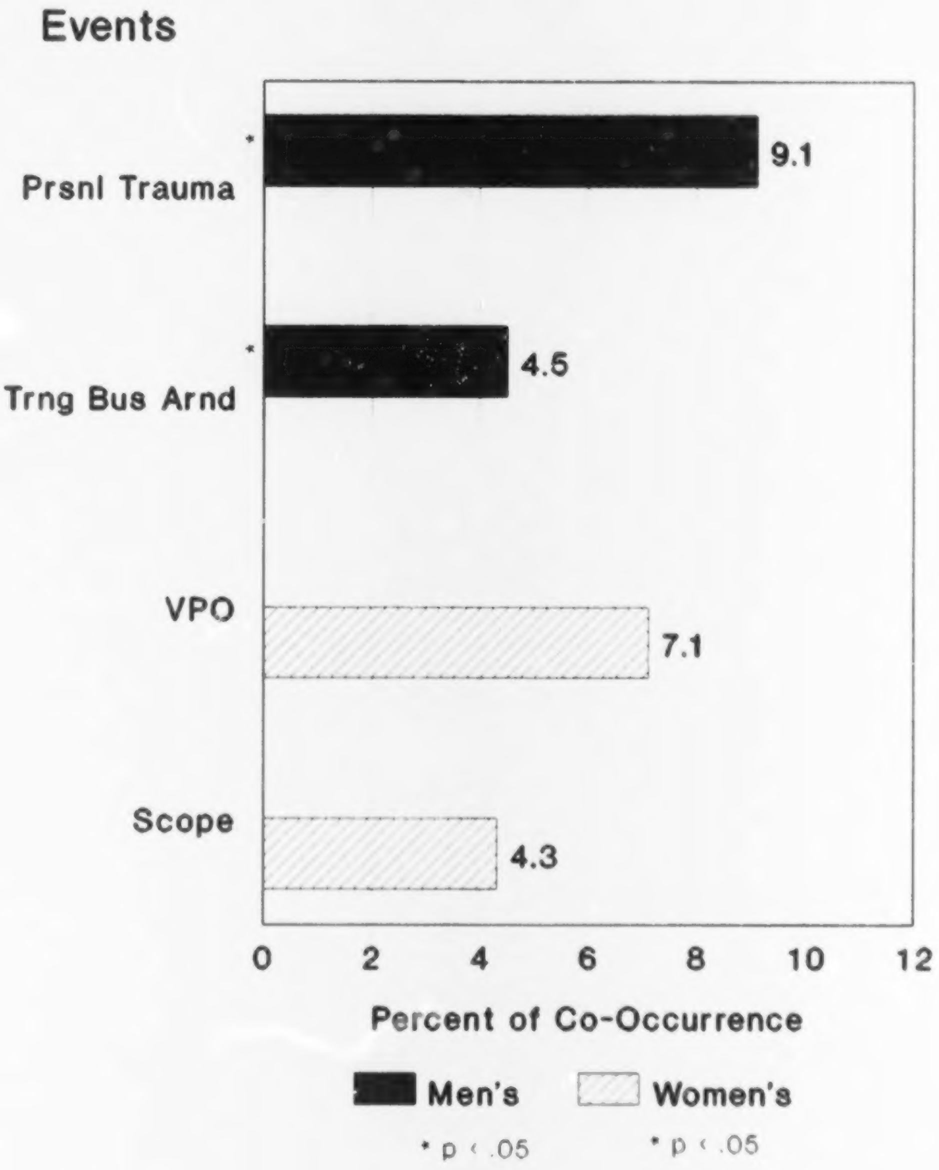
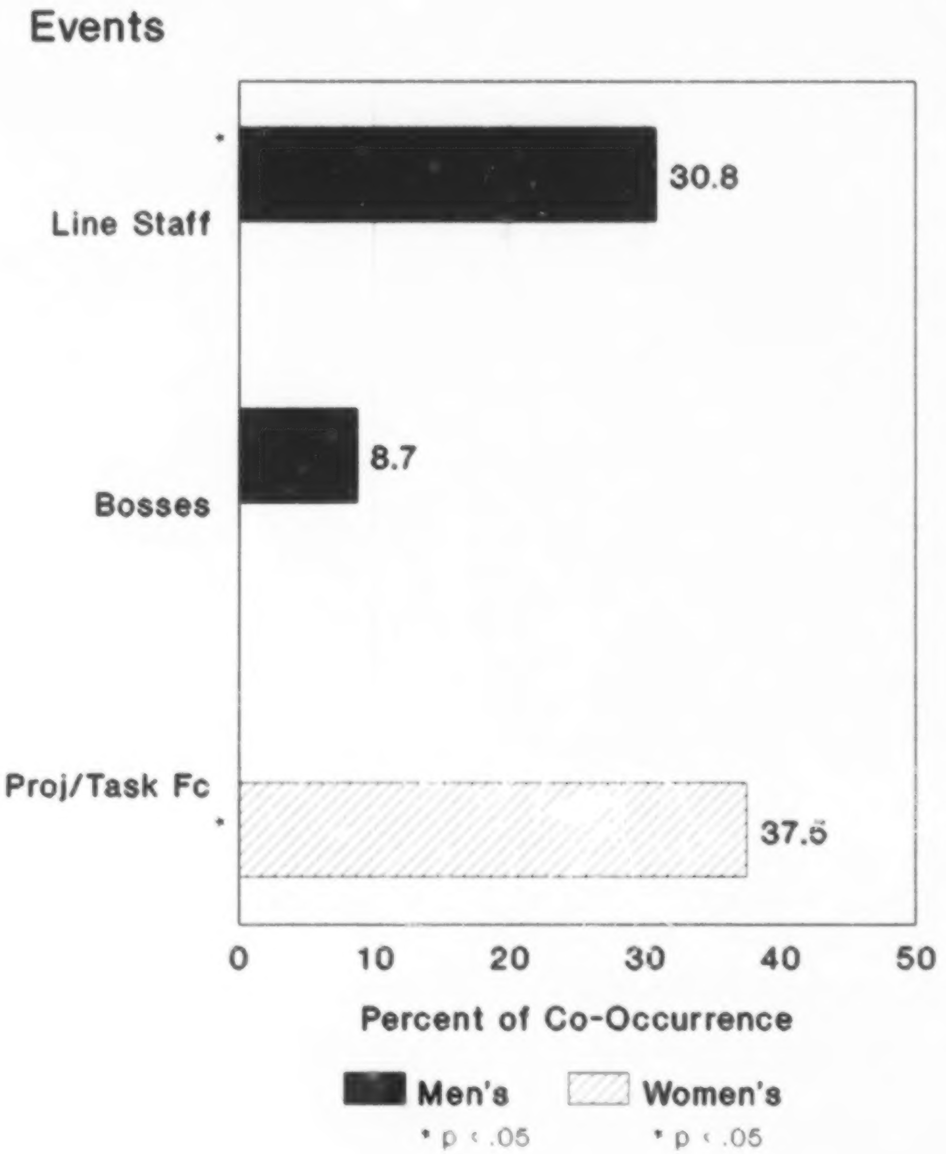
Understanding People's Perspectives



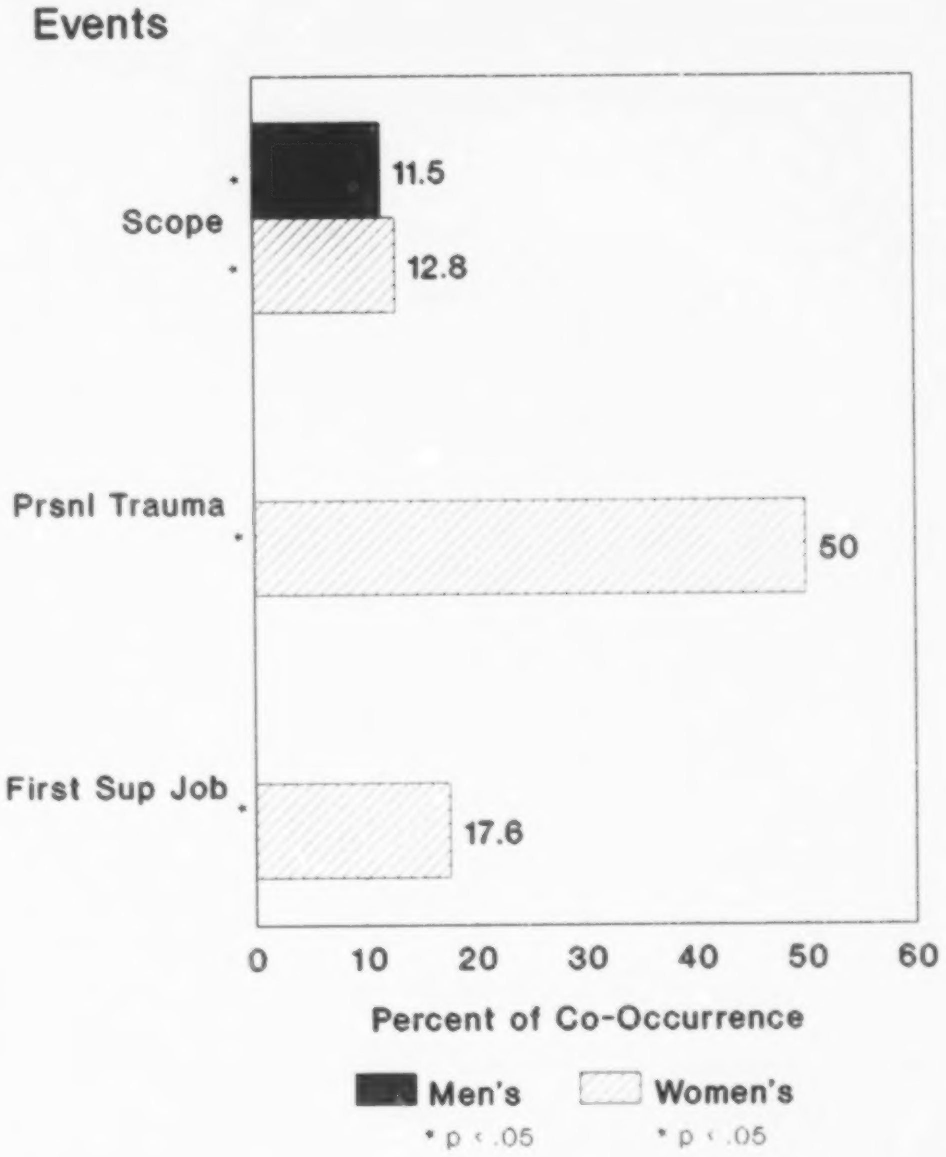
Use (And Abuse) Of Power



What Executives Are Like



You Can't Manage Everything All Alone



SECTION IV

Lesson and Key Event Definitions

LESSON DEFINITIONS

Excerpted from *Key Events In Executives' Lives*, E. Lindsey, V. Homes, & M. W. McCall, Jr., October 1987, Center for Creative Leadership, Technical Report 32.

ALL ABOUT THE BUSINESS: Learning about one's area (e.g., marketing, operations, research, manufacturing) or organization (e.g., the organization's products, structure, financial or commercial practices, markets).

BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE: Encompasses the kinds of examining, re-evaluating and prioritizing that managers experience in balancing their work and personal life. Key within this category is recognizing the value of life outside work and discovering the importance of slowing down and relaxing in one's work life.

BASIC MANAGEMENT VALUES: Statements of ideal values and practices and undesirable practices or management values, or principles that guide appropriate, ethical behavior as a manager. Most of the lessons in this category are examples of the integrity, trust, and credibility a manager must exemplify.

BEING TOUGH WHEN NECESSARY: Developing the strength to do what must be done in the service of the organization, even though it may involve a human cost. Being tough requires the ability to stand fast (resist pressure to back off) and to move ahead (grit one's teeth although the action to be taken has the potential of hurting others). This lesson involves learning that even when an action may hurt someone, to procrastinate is harmful.

BUILDING AND USING STRUCTURE AND CONTROL SYSTEMS: Learning to manage without being involved in every phase of day-to-day operations by setting up structures and systems which control work processes, building and controlling systems so they can run without the manager; changing structure rather than people allows managing by remote control.

CONFRONTING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS: Learning that it's more important to make the move quickly, and at the same time making sure one has adequate staffing to pick up the slack if the decision is a move to terminate.

COPING WITH AMBIGUOUS SITUATIONS: Discovering that one has the capacity to manage in an ambiguous situation. This category includes two major kinds of learnings: that even with incomplete knowledge one has the ability to act in a turbulent context, putting out brushfires while learning the job; and that learning on the run is one way to learn new skills while using old ones.

COPING WITH SITUATIONS BEYOND YOUR CONTROL: The recognition that there are times when one faces a situation that one can do nothing to change; that some situations are influenced by factors outside of the manager's control such as luck, others' performance, and unrealistic expectations. Coping with such situations requires ways of dealing with or making the best of the uncontrollable situations by changing goals, being patient or optimistic, distancing oneself, or redefining the situations.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT: Recognizing and learning that conflict is endemic; that one can deal with conflict or learn to deal with it by reducing, resolving, or avoiding it.

DEALING WITH PEOPLE OVER WHOM YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY: Getting cooperation in non-authority relationships, lateral relationships and others. Overall, this category states that to get things done one must be able to involve many others over whom one has no direct authority or control.

DEVELOPING OTHER PEOPLE: Learning that part of dealing with employees is developing them. This includes understanding that people can be helped to change and learn if the "right" environment (challenges, opportunity) is provided, and that individual growth benefits the organization.

DIRECTING AND MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES: The staffing, managing, and directing required in building a working organization. Delegation, sharing responsibility, building competence, team building, and leadership roles are predominant topics.

GETTING PEOPLE TO IMPLEMENT SOLUTIONS: Learning how to get people to implement solutions in terms of both requirements and challenges entails a shift in focus from individual task performance to managing people in order to accomplish a task. This category contains the recognition that people are key, that they can contribute either to accomplishments or to roadblocks. It also contains the realizations that management is a separate skill, that one must leave the nitty gritty of technical work behind, that technical competence is no longer enough, and that management requires reliance on and working through others.

HANDLING POLITICAL SITUATIONS: Encompasses both the realization that organizations are, in part, political systems and recommendations for dealing within them. For example, a recognition of the political component in decision making may result in the discovery that one needs to make a personal choice regarding the use of politics to achieve a goal—to sell a point, idea, or project.

HOW TO WORK WITH EXECUTIVES: How to work with executives in various contexts, from how to present ideas to them to the importance of impressing and not antagonizing them. This category contains critical deportment skills and the art of cajoling.

INNOVATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING METHODS: Lessons in the art of problem solving, in transcending habitual ways of thinking about problems.

KNOWING WHAT REALLY EXCITES YOU ABOUT WORK: Coming to the realization that one has found something which is exciting and worth doing on its own merit. This something can be a subject area, working with others, a lifestyle, or a contribution to something larger than one's self.

MANAGEMENT MODELS: Formal management theories or processes learned during the course of a career.

MANAGING FORMER BOSSES AND PEERS: Lessons that managers learn as they begin to be promoted over their peers and bosses and must deal with them in a different role. Stressed are the importance of light-handedness and knowing that one can neither make everyone happy nor always win.

PERSEVERING THROUGH ADVERSITY: Developing ways to accomplish one's goals in the face of obstacles, recognizing that difficult situations are often not out of one's control, and acting on them.

PERSONAL LIMITS AND BLIND SPOTS: Coming to terms with personal limits and blind spots in managing, that often stem from lack of time and/or lack of expertise to accomplish alone the variety of tasks necessary to be successful.

RECOGNIZING AND SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES: The notion that much of what happens is serendipitous; that one must be prepared to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Examples are: seize opportunities, prepare for the unexpected, don't assume time/opportunities are unlimited, plan ahead, develop a second skill.

SELF-CONFIDENCE: Statements of self-trust, knowing oneself, and arrogance. They span trust in one's own competence, in one's ability to take risks, handle tough situations, and be successful.

SENSITIVITY TO THE HUMAN SIDE OF MANAGEMENT: Fundamental assumptions of one's value about human beings. This category contains statements of warmth and caring and of insights into human nature. The fact that people are the business and have needs and lives which go beyond the day-to-day functions they perform lends awareness to the importance of sensitivity to others. In this category fall insights into how people should be treated and why.

SHOULDERING FULL RESPONSIBILITY: Taking full responsibility, assuming the risk for the group.

STRATEGIC THINKING: Learning to rise above day-to-day operations, to take a corporate view, and gain a broader perspective. This represents the transition from a short-term, smaller-scope view of the organization to being able to look at the big picture, seeing both a longer time frame and a broader organizational scope. Developing a longer time frame/strategic perspective involves looking at the corporation as a whole, thinking about its mission and direction. Seeing a broader organizational scope also involves looking at the organization with respect to its environment, legislation, and international issues.

STRATEGIES OF NEGOTIATION: Learning to deal with various types of external groups (i.e., clients, governments, competitors, or partners) in situations involving formal negotiation. These include adversarial, collaborative and customer/client relationships.

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR CAREER: Variations on the theme of how to take charge of the situation one is currently in; for example, realizing that you are the only one who can manage your career, set your own pace, broaden if it gets too easy, set goals, and go.

TECHNICAL/PROFESSIONAL SKILLS: Statements of new content in a well-defined technical area. This category includes learning technical or business content areas such as finance, strategic planning, computers, budgeting, and law.

UNDERSTANDING OTHER PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES: Dealing with people other than one's peers, bosses, and subordinates requires understanding their perspectives, speaking their language. These languages emphasize the notion that people are different and that to be successful in dealing or communicating with them, one must be sensitive to these differences and act in accordance.

USE AND ABUSE OF POWER: Examples of dealing with the double-edged sword of power. Inherent within this category is recognition of the dilemma that use of power may either help or hinder the attainment of desired ends.

WHAT EXECUTIVES ARE LIKE: Learning what executive are like, both the positives and the negatives, demystifies the executive aura. This category describes executives as human beings and describes what they value, how they operate, and how they see things.

YOU CAN'T MANAGE EVERYTHING ALL ALONE: The discovery that, by its very nature, the managerial job cannot be done alone; that delegation and reliance on others are crucial components of the job; realizing that the scope is too large to handle alone; that one's managerial success requires building teams; and relationships and reliance on others.

EVENT DEFINITIONS

Excerpted from *Key Events In Executives' Lives*, E. Lindsey, V. Homes, & M. W. McCall, Jr., October 1987, Center for Creative Leadership, Technical Report 32.

ASSIGNMENTS

First Supervisory Job: The first job in which the manager was responsible for the supervision of others. First Supervisory Job assignments welcomed these executives to the world of management and a new realm of problems, i.e., people.

Managing a Larger Scope: An increase in responsibility that was both broader and different from what had gone before. Changes in scope included switching to new businesses and massive increases in numbers of people, dollars, and functions to manage. In scope changes, managers coped with numerous problems: the enormity of the job, pressure from top management, staffing and P & L problems, and unfamiliarity with the products, the business, etc.

In all scope changes, managers were confronted with a new situation in which their knowledge was, in some way, incomplete. While directing others and seeing that operations ran smoothly, they had to learn essential parts of their job on the run. Getting their arms around the job was the consistent theme of this event.

Project/Task Force Assignments: Discrete projects or temporary assignments, done alone or as part of a team or task force. Aimed at specific outcomes, they brought deadlines and high visibility. They typically involved grasping new content areas or activities *and* grappling with new relationships. These were typically taken on as short-term assignments rather than as new jobs per se. Often they were extracurricular to a manager's job, creating additional demands on a manager's time.

Whatever the type, durations, or complexity of the assignment, Project/Task Force Assignments were begun to meet a particular organizational goal. More than other assignments, these had expected and recognizable endpoints indicated by the failure or success of a project.

Turning a Business Around: Fixing and stabilizing, turning around a failing operation was the key to successful completion of this event. Stabilizing operations gone haywire required managers to *dismantle and reconstruct* existing operations that were blatantly characterized by poor business performance and, almost always, by resistant, demoralized, or incompetent staffs. Due to the need to simultaneously tear down and build up staff and systems, managers were forced to exhibit opposites in their behavior—toughness and structuring behaviors had to be counterbalanced with persuasion and a light touch.

Although the core problems were fairly clear, these managers usually discovered unexpected problems and obstacles for which they were often unprepared. Restoring long-lost credibility with corporate headquarters coupled with high visibility and pressure was often reported in the line environment. Staff position and product fixes typically placed managers in situations in which they lacked authority over people (e.g., management, customers) whose support they needed. In addition to these obstacles, some of these managers found themselves in new cultures or business arenas or as replacements for well-liked managers.

Turning a business around conditions were sometimes created by reorganizations following mergers, sometimes mandated by corporate, and sometimes discovered by managers upon a transfer or promotion.

Line-to-Staff Switches: These events involved managers who moved (not always by choice) from line operations to corporate staff roles. The purpose of these assignments was to teach managers the other side of the business and expose them to corporate strategies and culture, but the jobs themselves varied greatly. Unlike many other events, Line-to-Staff Switches do not fall into neat subcategories: The assigned areas encompassed planning, training, and human resources, and productivity improvement. There was also wide variation in the length of assignment (nine-month stint to permanent job) and level of the manager (entry level to VP).

Starting From Scratch: Building something from nothing or from almost nothing. Organizational strategies for growth and expansion were met through such assignments as building a plant, creating a new department or subsidiary, opening up a new market, or introducing a new product line.

HARDSHIPS

Career Setback: These events are cases of a job-person mismatch, in which something about the manager's position was regarded as a career setback. These managers described how they had been demoted, exiled to crummy jobs, or had seen a badly wanted promotion given to someone else. The common theme is that the job did not suit perceived skills or aspirations. The circumstances leading up to the setbacks ranged from being in the wrong place during a reorganization to personal mistakes; but regardless of the nature or cause of these events, troublesome circumstances had occurred or accrued and managers, recognizing an incongruity, felt stuck . . . or stung.

Changing Jobs: Changing jobs is about changing careers. In these events executives traded in successful (or at least known) careers for a chance at something new. These moves were preceded by discontent and accompanied by a willingness to take risks. Some managers insisted on being transferred to new areas while others left companies they had been with for over a decade. The tactics varied, but their goals were the same: to find new business challenges with continued career growth.

Personal Trauma: Crisis experiences with a powerful emotional impact. Executives described events in which their families, health, even their lives, were threatened by unanticipated tragedies. These traumas stemmed from both work and personal life and include personal injury or illness, the death of others, divorce, and combat duty.

The consequences of the trauma events were profound and far reaching. Managers were forced to re-evaluate aspects of their lives that they had previously taken for granted, and in many cases, the trauma's impact was compounded by other life events. In order to overcome the effects of these hardships, managers often found it necessary to make lasting changes in their behavior and attitudes.

These events and their traumatic effects varied in severity and degree of suddenness, but, regardless of the specific nature of the event, all had a profound and personal impact.

Employee Performance Problems: In these events managers had to confront an employee with a problem that was performance related. The problems revolved around ineptness, alcoholism, and older mangers who had let technology pass them by.

According to these executives, trouble with employees was common in many of their job assignments, but not the focus of the event. When managers recounted subordinate performance problems, the nature of the assignment was rarely mentioned and the context of their jobs was irrelevant. These hardship events were distinguished by the one-on-one confrontation with the problem individual. Managers had to deal with the failure and mistakes of employees while genuinely upset over the pathos of the situation.

Two types of actions were taken in these situations. First, the manager would usually try to salvage the situation through counseling and development. If the subordinate did not respond (or the situation was hopeless), managers were forced to fire the person.

Business Mistakes: Stories of managerial shortcomings that derailed goals. Errors were made in dealing with people critical to a project's success. Failure to give or obtain necessary information, support, or agreement on specific issues curtailed plans and collapsed business ventures.

Business Mistakes include ideas that didn't fly, conflicts that got out of hand, deals that fell through, and failures to make the most of opportunities. Although specific outcomes were diverse, these events were united by two themes: The outcomes were unsatisfactory to the manager involved and they stemmed from mistakes in dealing with key people.

OTHER PEOPLE

Bosses: Superiors that managers interacted with, or observed, during the course of their careers. Some of these models were characterized as possessing exceptional skills or attributes. Others were remembered for their weaknesses and the impact those had on people. But, regardless of whether the role model was positive, negative, or a little of both, each case described a person who profoundly influenced the executive's approach to management.

Values Playing Out: Snapshots of behavior occurring at work. These were short-lived events involving a person (or persons) doing something to another person (or persons) that had a visible impact. The manager, as an actor in the scene or as an observer of it, drew a value-laden conclusion from it. Events of this type almost always were of short duration, occurred in chain-of-command relationships, and were discussed "out of context"—that is, the "snapshot" had survived while the larger scenario in which it happened had dimmed. The values conveyed were primarily what one ought or ought not to do in dealing with other people.

OTHER EVENTS

Purely Personal: A range of experiences outside the workplace that contributed to managers' development. The experiences described had occurred in family, school, community: life in general. Their occurrence ranged in time from childhood to the present, and they varied in nature from difficult situations to inspirational ones.

Coursework: The formal training and academic programs attended by managers. The specific purpose of these events is to provide managers the opportunity to obtain information and experiences not available from their day-to-day jobs.

Early Work Experience: Important work experiences that took place early in the managers' careers. In most cases these were nonmanagement jobs that introduced the aspiring manager to new environments, cultures, and management philosophies.

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OUR MISSION

The Center for Creative Leadership is a nonprofit educational institution founded in 1970 in Greensboro, North Carolina. Our mission is to encourage and develop creative leadership and effective management for the good of society overall.

We accomplish our mission through research, training, and publication—with emphasis on the widespread, innovative application of the behavioral sciences to the challenges facing the leaders of today and tomorrow.

OUR VALUES

Our work should serve society. We expect our work to make a difference in the quality of leadership in the world. To that end, we try to discover what is most important to do, and focus our resources for the greatest, most enduring benefit. In doing this we continually remind ourselves of the inherent worth of all people. We consider it our responsibility to be attentive to the unique needs of leaders who are women or members of minorities. To make a difference in the world and to turn ideas into action, we must be pioneers in our field, contributors of knowledge, creators of solutions, explorers of ideas, and risk-takers in behalf of society.

Our mission and our clients deserve our best. We expect our service to our clients to be worthy, vigorous, resourceful, courteous, and reliable. In the pursuit of our mission, we intend to be a healthy, creative organization with the financial and inner resources needed to produce our best work. We require ourselves to abide by the highest professional standards and to look beyond the letter of professional guidelines to their spirit. This includes being forthright and candid with every client and program participant, scrupulously guarding the confidentiality of sensitive personal and organizational information, and truthfully representing our capabilities to prospective clients.

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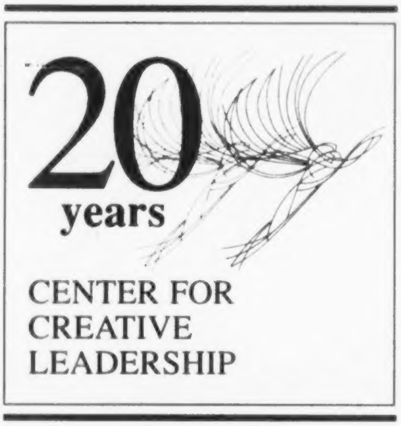
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